Commentary

VOLUME NINETY-FOUR • NUMBER THREE • SEPTEMBER 1992

ELECTION '92

Have the Democrats Really Changed?

A Debate

Richard Schifter / Thomas Sowell

Why I Thought Perot Would Win

Norman Podhoretz

Israel Watch: The Might and the Right

Ruth R. Wisse

Looking Back at Lot's Wife

Rebecca Goldstein

Goering's Jewish Friend

Bent Blüdnikow

A Story

Jennifer Moses

Books in Review: George Russell / Evelyn Toynton / Richard John Neuhaus / James W. Muller / Peter Brimelow / Michael Lind

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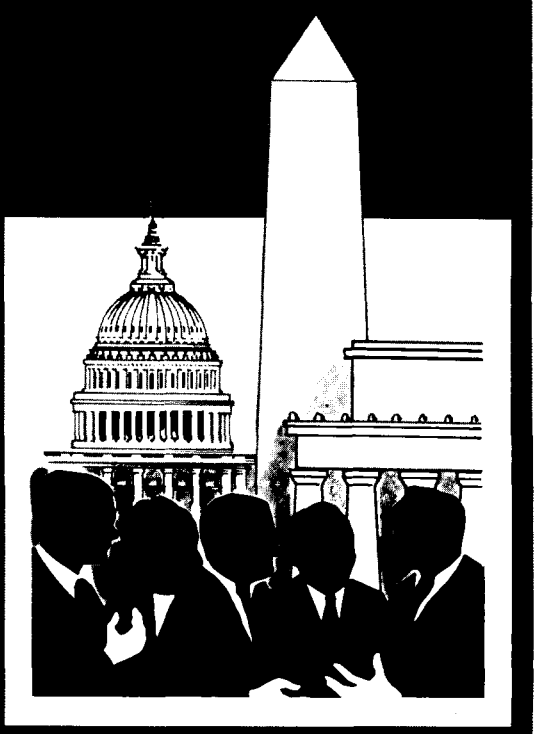

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Letters from Readers

Buchanan & the Conservatives

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

My colleagues and I at *National Review* have the greatest regard for Norman Podhoretz and COMMENTARY. They have had a profound and beneficial impact on the American conservative movement. And I generally find myself in warm agreement with Mr. Podhoretz personally.

So I am naturally sorry to find myself on the opposite side of the barricades to Mr. Podhoretz. But having read his essay, "Buchanan and the Conservative Crackup" [May], with some care, I can only conclude that the reports of my crackup have been greatly exaggerated.

Mr. Podhoretz argues that I persuaded William F. Buckley, Jr. personally and *National Review* corporatively to endorse Patrick J. Buchanan in New Hampshire, despite having pronounced Buchanan to be an anti-Semite only a month previously, in pursuit of the "fantasy" of a conservative presidential candidate against President Bush, and with nothing to show for it in the end but a divided conservative movement tempted toward extremism. Quite a bill of particulars.

I am tempted not to rebut Mr. Podhoretz's description of me as the Iago of conservatism, first persuading Buckley to endorse Buchanan and then, for consistency's sake, cajoling him into withdrawing his earlier charge of anti-Semitism. It is an extremely flattering theory but one, alas, built upon shaky foundations.

First, despite Mr. Podhoretz's insistence upon it, Buckley had never alleged that Buchanan was anti-Semitic. The charge was the lesser one that "what he said and did during the period [of the Gulf crisis] amounted to anti-Semitism. . . ." Again, *pace* Mr. Podhoretz, Buckley *had* communicated his own private guess that Buchanan was not anti-Semitic in that part of the sentence represented by dots in Mr. Podhoretz's quotation: ". . . whatever it was that drove him to say and do it: most probably, an iconoclastic temperament." This judgment is entirely in harmony with *National Review*'s editorial statement that "although Mr. Buchanan is *not* anti-Semitic, he behaved mischievously in alleging that support for the Gulf War was confined to Israel and its amen corner among neoconservatives and foolishly in failing to apologize for this when challenged"; with what I and others at the magazine have written under our own bylines; and with the advice given by the editors of *National Review* to its readers as the primary campaign wore on.

We all agreed to give a tactical endorsement of Pat Buchanan in the New Hampshire, "Super Tuesday," and Michigan primaries. We all qualified even that endorsement with strong statements of disagreement with him over trade and foreign policy. We all called upon him to apologize for those remarks that had given rise to allegations of anti-Semitism. And we all said very plainly, as Mr. Podhoretz concedes, that we would not have given an endorsement of Buchanan "if we had believed him to be anti-Semitic." Since no diplomatic skill is required to secure agreement among like-minded people, it was not necessary for me to play Iago on this occasion. (I make no promises for the future.)

I realize that the distinction on which we relied in endorsing Buchanan—namely, the distinction between having written and said anti-Semitic things and being an anti-Semite—is not one that Mr. Podhoretz accepts. And, of course, if the writing and saying continue long enough, the distinction does indeed become unreal. But it is a distinction that is essential if we are not to drive men and women of good will out of public life for isolated mischief, overdone polemic, or even simple misjudgment. And it is a distinction that is widely accepted among participants in this debate. One of the most distinguished signatories to the letter objecting to *National Review*'s endorsement of Buchanan told me personally that he had signed it not because he believed Buchanan to be anti-Semitic, but as a warning that he mind his forensic manners.

That said, what were our positive reasons for endorsing Buchanan? For Mr. Podhoretz's account of the calculations underlying the

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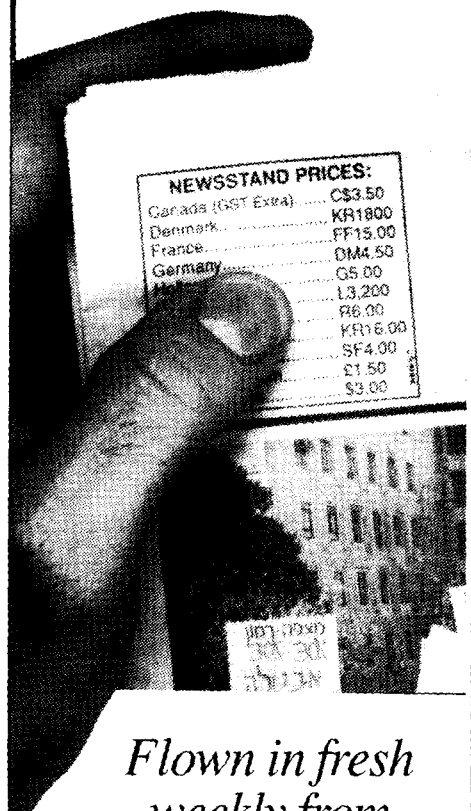

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endorsement is not wholly accurate. Our first best hope was not, of course, that a Buchanan candidacy would drive Bush from the field, but that it would draw him to the Right. And with the sacking of John Frohnmayer of the National Endowment for the Arts and Bush's apology for breaking his tax pledge, that is exactly what happened.

Mr. Podhoretz dismisses these concessions as "paltry." It is not clear why. Frohnmayer's defenestration and his replacement by the sensible Anne-Imelda Radice were symbolic resistance to a campaign of symbolic outrages. In office Radice is showing some courage in resisting grants to artists whose operating principle seems to be "I shock, therefore I am." And Bush's apology effectively reinstated his "no new taxes" pledge.

Apparently the reason Mr. Podhoretz distrusts such concessions is his belief that Bush, once safely reelected, will take his revenge on conservatives by reneging on them. By the test of experience, he has half a point, if not more. But the lesson of experience is not all on one side. Though eventually abrogated, the first tax pledge did at least buy time since it took Bush a full two years to wiggle out of it. And given the embarrassment that a second abrogation would entail, we might well get three years of lower taxes out of the apology that the Buchanan candidacy wrung from the President. Not enough, I grant you, but better than giving the President a free hand.

As for the notion that a Buchanan candidacy might draw other conservatives into the race by inflicting damage on Bush and revealing his electoral vulnerability, that was never a major reason behind our endorsement. For myself, I thought it possible but unlikely. In view of Buchanan's early success and Perot's emergence, however, was such a consideration really the outright "fantasy" that Mr. Podhoretz claims? If so, that was only because potential conservative leaders failed to read the runes of Bush's unpopularity as accurately as did *National Review*.

No one can predict very easily how the political situation will look on November 3, let alone in January 1996 when the next primary season begins. But I believe that the prospects for harmonious relations among conservatives, and for a stronger conservative influence on politics as a whole, will be the better because *National Review* resisted the temptation to demonize Buchanan and drive him from respectable politics.

Certainly Buchanan invited criticism. And he received plenty from us. But to describe him as a fascist or an anti-Semite, in my view, went beyond the bounds of fairness or accuracy.

And such hyperbole risked driving not only Buchanan but also a substantial number of his supporters out of respectable conservatism and into either vengeful factionalism on the Republican Right or, worse, onto the farther shores of third-party extremism. In both cases, they would have been released from the restraints on rhetoric, policy, and activism that political respectability imposes; in the second, they would have formed a large pool of "wasted" votes, thus helping to put and keep liberal Democrats in power. I do not think that Mr. Podhoretz would welcome either eventuality.

If, on the other hand, we "maintain the unity and integrity of the conservative movement . . . and transform Buchanan from this year's Wallace into one of several respectable conservative leaders for 1996" (if I may quote myself from last March), then conservatism will remain a potent political force. Of course, there will still be battles over its direction in the post-Reagan, post-Communist world. But in those battles I expect to be on the same side of the barricades as Mr. Podhoretz.

JOHN O'SULLIVAN
National Review
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I believe that Norman Podhoretz fails to address several issues which, to me and a lot of American voters, are quite important not only with regard to the election of 1992, but with regard to the future of America (and America's relationship with Israel).

First, an argument could be made that Patrick J. Buchanan did everyone a service by knocking the nascent David Duke movement out of the running. By seizing on the four issues considered important by "bedrock America" (quotas, taxes, abortion, and gun control), Buchanan preempted Duke and gave voters a much more palatable choice, whether because they actually believed Buchanan had a chance to win the nomination, or because they wanted to send a message to Bush to get back on to the Reaganite reservation.

Second, concerning Israel, I am not here to defend Buchanan, but is he really more hostile than James Baker or George Bush? What I have noticed is that while . . . Bill Clinton has taken a position that could be characterized as "pro-Israel," support for the Jewish state has not been strong in the current Democratic-controlled Congress. In fact, if we look at the last few elections, the Republican platforms always had a plank supporting Israel while the Democratic planks, as I recall, seemed to emphasize the "right of all peoples to self-determination" and other statements which suggest more support for the PLO than concern for the security of Israel. . . .

On the issue of paleoconservatives and neoconservatives, it has been my observation that so-called "conservatives" such as William J. Bennett are just recycled liberals; I saw a letter from Bennett defending a ban on "assault rifles" as being some sort of check on drug dealers, as if drug dealers buy their firearms legally. It is just this sort of fuzzy thinking that will keep Bennett and his type of social liberal out of the White House. I do not believe that Buchanan will make it to the presidency, but I do believe he has filled a very worthwhile function in the 1992 race for the White House.

DENNIS E. BERGER
North Miami Beach, Florida

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "Buchanan and the Conservative Crackup" Norman Podhoretz concludes, incorrectly, that the slogan "America First" has anti-Semitic connotations and that Patrick J. Buchanan represents flagitious conservatism. The truth, however, is quite different.

Call the America First Committee naive or an exercise in futility, but to suggest, as Mr. Podhoretz does, because of one infamous speech made by Charles Lindbergh, that the movement was made up of hatemongers is historically inaccurate. The movement was made up of progressives and Taft Republicans. Charles Beard and Norman Thomas were the rule, not the exception, unless Wil-

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liam Benton, Oswald G. Villard, John L. Lewis, and Chester Bowles were secretly Coughlinites. Furthermore, if the America First movement was a sinister group, why weren't Gerald Ford and John F. Kennedy, both of whom were members in 1941, vilified by the press and their opponents when they ran for President for having once belonged to such an organization? While the America First Committee was jejune in many ways, it . . . was only advocating the very same concept that FDR and Wendell Willkie campaigned on in 1940, namely, that Hitler's war wasn't America's business—yet.

Secondly, Buchanan's America First is hardly "isolationism." He has been leading the charge for helping countries gain independence (such as Croatia), and condemning President Bush for maintaining the status quo. Buchanan has never once suggested that this country should retreat from its responsibilities in the world. Exhibit A in this regard is the speech he gave last April to the Daughters of the American Revolution, in which he said,

> We will never turn our backs on the world. Because we Americans come from every continent, we want to travel the world. Because we are the greatest trading nation in history, we want peaceful commerce with all nations, and we want contact and communication, both cultural and diplomatic, with all the people of the planet.

Those who still believe Buchanan is advocating Fortress America need to take a cold shower.

Additionally, Buchanan's position on trade needs some ventilation. . . . It strikes me as odd that Buchanan-bashers fail to note that he has called for eliminating institutions which hobble free trade, such as the Export-Import Bank and the Commodity Credit Corporation. Likewise, it is ironic that those who criticize Buchanan on trade do so by clinging to Reagan's mantle—a mantle which has been defaced by more protectionist legislation than any other, unfortunately, in the last twenty years.

The fact of the matter is, Pat Buchanan is a mainstream conservative. When Irving Kristol first started saying America needs to start looking out for itself and defending the national interest, nobody in COMMENTARY denounced

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him as a Neanderthal isolationist. When congressional conservatives . . . criticized our immigration policy and demanded a curb on illegal immigration, the editors of COMMENTARY did not denounce them as "nativists." And when President Reagan was enacting voluntary export restraints on Japanese cars, no conservative was barring him from the conservative movement or accusing him of pandering to the "darker strains of American conservatism." Why, then, Mr. Podhoretz, does Pat Buchanan deserve this special treatment, the kind of treatment that was not extended to other conservatives when they enunciated or enacted the very theories Buchanan campaigned on?

ANDREW J. MURPHY
Memphis, Tennessee

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In 1941 I was a fifteen-year old boy from an Irish-Catholic background living in New York City. I was just becoming interested in politics and remember the America First movement well because the families of two of my good friends were active in that cause.

I have no recollection of the anti-Semitic overtones in America First described in Norman Podhoretz's article. The America First people I remember were not pro-German but anti-British, whatever the cost. They hated Britain for the measures it had taken to prevent Irish independence, especially the use of those police irregulars known as the "Black and Tans."

I suppose you could make a case that anyone who was anti-British enough in 1941 to support a program that benefited Germany was in effect anti-Semitic, but we did not think of it that way.

JOHN N. BUCKLEY
Sioux City, Iowa

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Norman Podhoretz has given us a salutary statement of the facts about Patrick J. Buchanan. He also recognizes that Buchanan's supporters on the whole did not share his more reprehensible views and supported him largely because the choice between two liberal candidates was unpalatable. Moreover, it is doubtful whether an (inconceivable) Buchanan presidency would be more hostile to Israel than Bush and Baker have already shown themselves to be—and will no doubt increasingly be, once past the hurdle of reelection. . . .

E. BADIAN
Cambridge, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

While I agree with nearly all of Norman Podhoretz's assessment in "Buchanan and the Conservative Crackup," I want to share a different perspective.

Two things. One, Patrick J. Buchanan did not make a "decision to throw his lot in with one of the darker strains of American conservatism." As Irving Kristol has pointed out, these people are not what we have been accustomed to think of as conservatives; they are radical reactionaries. Two, I think that what Mr. Podhoretz calls "the fight now beginning for the soul of the conservative movement" is already over. The media, Left and Right (and *National Review* in particular), describe Buchanan and friends as conservative. So the word, as many of us have been accustomed to using it for the past 25 years or so (after we had to give up "liberal"), is now wholly corrupt, and we are no longer conservatives, neo- or otherwise. I am not quite sure what we are, but I know that we need a new vocabulary to distinguish us from those who now possess the word.

If the fight is indeed over, as I think it is, then it strikes me that there is an opportunity here for us now-former conservatives to define ourselves as what Midge Decter has said we are, and what I believe we are, namely, the Center. If liberals are the radical Left and conservatives are now the radical Right, then yes, precisely, we are the Center, the mainstream, the American realists who have nearly always been the Center. It may well be time to claim that ground, rejecting both the radical Right and the radical Left as we go about it, and realizing that just now the radical Right, the conservatives, need the most attention because as a public service we should make sure that they remain utterly disreputable.

I have talked to many people who are bemoaning "the schism," "the split," whatever, but I really find it quite difficult to be depressed about it because we who are no longer conservatives wound up with all the brains. Of course Buchanan is bad news, but Mr. Podhoretz is quite correct in saying he has not much more real support than David Duke; and the crazies will be ever with us, so we simply need to be vigilant about them, as we have always been. Mr. Podhoretz is also correct that what is now the conservative movement will be "dragged back into a marginal sectarian status with very little appeal to anyone outside its own fever swamps." That's fine, let Buchanan lead the charge into . . . oblivion. But that is not necessarily a disaster—it may be a success, because, as Mr. Podhoretz notes, the American people seem to have rejected Buchanan as one of the crazies.

The real disaster would be our not dissociating ourselves very forcefully from the Buchanan-style conservatives and claiming the Center. (We should not get into a long fight over who gets to own a word, the way we did years ago over the word "liberal." That battle is already over and we will only marginalize ourselves instead of the crazies if we waste energy rehearsing it.) We are somewhat unaccustomed to the kind of activity that is necessary because we have defended ourselves for so long, functioning as a counterweight to the Left. But the Left is truly bankrupt (and the Center knows it), and what is now called the conservative Right is equally bankrupt. I believe that leaves us in charge. So it's time for offense, not defense, and now may be the time, I think, to claim the Center.

ELIZABETH B. LURIE
W.H. Brady Foundation
Maggie Valley, North Carolina

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Norman Podhoretz includes a fairly accurate analysis of the foolishness with which many otherwise rational American conservatives responded to the candidacy of Patrick J. Buchanan. That they, in essence, abandoned principle because of their distaste for the policies of the Bush administration hardly justified backing a candidate who was running to seize and fundamentally reshape the movement of which they are a part.

Buchanan has been a conservative hero to millions for years because of his gleeful willingness publicly to take on the political enemies of conservatism, but he has never really been a part of what has come over the years to be known as the conservative "movement." In fact, his recent writings

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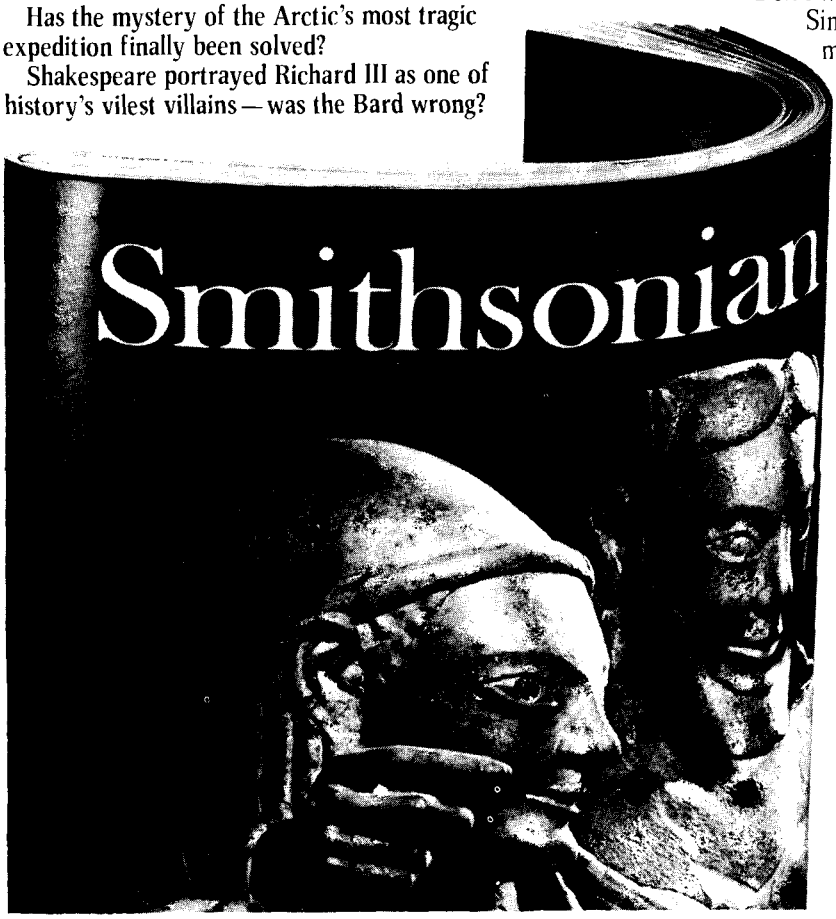

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and his campaign rhetoric represent a conscious repudiation of the movement itself and the political conservatism of William F. Buckley, Jr., Barry Goldwater, and Ronald Reagan, as well as of the policies of the Bush administration.

Buchanan proudly calls himself a "conservative of the heart," but the modern conservative movement is a "conservatism of the head," carefully nurtured over the years by the likes of Buckley, the late Frank Meyer, and a score of economists and philosophers dedicated to free economics, the primacy of the individual, and a limited state at home, coupled with a willingness to side with those yearning for these same things abroad. It is this conservatism that Buchanan rejects in favor of isolationism, protectionism, and a curious sort of nativism that has been rejected by mainstream conservatives for decades.

Buchanan is really what a friend of his once described as a "street-corner conservative," one who never developed beyond the values and prejudices of his old Washington, D.C. neighborhood. He has always known what he doesn't like and has spent most of his time seeking scapegoats for the problems of modern America. He is bright and quick, but his reading and thinking have been more to gather information with which to attack his enemies than to develop a sensible philosophy of his own. As a result, he has simply adopted old, tired, and wrong-headed ideas that few thinking conservatives would support on their merits.

That they did so implicitly by backing a candidacy which gave currency to those ideas reflects badly on their own judgment. The leaders of a political movement based on ideas and principles rather than a simple desire for power have, it seems to me, an obligation to demand that those they support remain true to those ideas and principles. This is something that many conservatives who ought to know better forgot in their desire to find a way to punish a President they don't like.

To hear some of them justify their action by claiming either that Buchanan does not *really* believe what he says, or that his views on core economic, social, and foreign-policy issues are beside the point, would be funny if it weren't so sad.

Your readers may be interested to know that on the merits, at least, the average conservative activist has shown somewhat better judgment than the average conservative leader. At this year's Conservative Political Action Conference in Washington, D.C., nearly 1,000 attendees were asked to state a preference between Bush and Buchanan and to say whether they agreed with Buchanan's foreign, immigration, and trade policies. Buchanan beat Bush narrowly (after all, these people are as upset by Bush as their leaders), but his policies were rejected across the board, with more than 60 percent rejecting his views on foreign policy and trade.

This is good news for those of us who hope and believe that when Buchanan is forced to defend his own positions without the luxury of playing off George Bush, he will encounter far tougher sledding.

DAVID A. KEENE
Chairman, American
Conservative Union
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Some time ago, Patrick J. Buchanan cast doubt on one aspect . . . of the Holocaust by claiming in an article that one could not kill people with the exhaust from diesel engines, which was used in the gas chambers at Treblinka. He later claimed in a television interview with David Frost that what he had really meant was that diesel exhaust would not poison you, but it did displace the oxygen.

Buchanan was being dishonest, of course, since his whole point had been that diesel exhaust was not lethal, not that he disputed the exact mechanism of death. But he was also incorrect. According to an article in the *Encyclopedia of Occupational Health and Safety*, diesel exhaust contains carbon monoxide. A graph accompanying the article shows that as the monoxide rises, the oxygen falls.

These data were hard to find and I pass them on to your readers so that their opinions, unlike Buchanan's, may be factually based. . . .

DAVID C. STOLINSKY
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Having grown up close to politics in the American Southwest, where the suburban and/or Babbitt form of anti-Semitism was well-established—one might say, indigenous—I know that this mindless prejudice survives at both the redneck and the blueblood (Gore Vidal) ends of the American social spectrum and in some quarters of the American media, sometimes disguised as fulminations against the "excesses" of Israel. Being familiar with Patrick J. Buchanan's coarse and mediocre journalism, and having seen something of his Le Pen-like style on television, I felt no surprise at his tactical use during that spoiling campaign of what Hannah Arendt once called an outrage to common sense.

It seems an extraordinary luxury—an American luxury—to be able to argue about this phenomenon in terms of abstract principle, applying a pro-and-con exegetic technique to journalistic texts and electoral speeches. The casuistry of some who defend Buchanan and his friends in this exchange is not very reassuring from the standpoint of an American in Europe; it appears to suggest that for Americans at home anti-Semitism is, despite recent history and current events across the Atlantic, a matter which can safely be fogged by the subtleties of intellectual debate. It evokes the official and popular failure of Americans to take seriously what was happening in 1930's Europe—and, more grimly, the refusal of many who were informed of it to care very actively. . . . I remember only too well that it was a *Japanese* attack—not Hitler—which finally provoked Americans to action.

HERB GREER
Manchester, England

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Long before the end of the cold war and the departure of Ronald Reagan, Patrick J. Buchanan gave notice to the conservative movement that his thinking was different from that of all patriotic Americans who were concerned about the danger that the terrorist states of the Middle East, both Islamic and secular, represent to the entire civilized world. . . .

When Iran passed its death sentence upon Salman Rushdie for writing *The Satanic Verses*, Buchanan wrote two columns in the New York *Post* (February 18, 1989 and April 21, 1990) which roundly condemned Rushdie for incurring

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the Islamic world's wrath. While I no longer have the 1989 column, the 1990 one equates people who would defend Rushdie with flag burners, creators of obscene art, and even child pornographers! Buchanan claimed that all of these evil people were joined in an unholy alliance to "divide their common enemy, the believers in a transcendental God." . . .

Yet ever since Arab terrorists massacred Israeli athletes at the 1972 Olympics, the world should have been on notice that it is in mortal danger from the terrorist kingdoms of the Middle East. These days, Islamic fundamentalism is steamrolling across Africa and casting its eye upon the newly-freed republics of Soviet Central Asia. The world is in mortal danger that the children of Khomeini could step into the power vacuum created by the Soviet Union's demise. . . .

As Mr. Podhoretz pointed out, people voting for Buchanan mainly did so as a protest. They did not understand the horrible mistake they were making.

WALLINGTON M. SIMPSON, JR.
Pomona, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

May I add a postscript to Norman Podhoretz's "Open Letter to William F. Buckley, Jr." ["What Is Anti-Semitism?," February] and his follow-up on Patrick J. Buchanan?

One cannot read any of Buckley's prolific writings . . . without finding an eloquent turn of phrase, or a metaphor or symbol that captivates one's attention. In truth, a wordsmith. Hence, one wonders whether he is being an apologist in describing as only "clumsy forensic manners" Buchanan's vicious comment, prior to the allied attack on Iraq, that "only two groups, the Israel Defense Ministry and its amen corner in the United States, are beating the drums for war in the Middle East." Should this comment not, in fact, have rightfully been classified as unadulterated anti-Semitism? To conclude that such and similar remarks by Buchanan on national television are "less than genocidal offenses" may be acceptable to those unaware that words have consequences, but not to someone like Buckley who, in an editorial in *National Review* of July 4, 1986, recorded the historical truth that arose from the ashes of the Holocaust, namely, that "no society, however civilized its pedigree, can complacently be trusted to desist from the most ferocious human activity: genocide."

Again, why would anyone—let alone Buckley—ever expect the likes of a Joseph Sobran or a Buchanan, neither of whom apparently is governed by "right reason," to acknowledge "rationally and charitably" that their prejudicial utterances and mischievous use of hyperbole could—actually do—incite violent and anti-Semitic reactions? For "prejudice," as Buckley, once again at his best with words, is moved to conclude, "can metastasize—and has done so, to be sure, by mutation—into Auschwitz." So, when infamous words can turn—have turned—into guns, gas, and ovens, they become a clear and present danger. And wise men, often spinning in the gyre of

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their words, must ever be conscious of their own language, particularly when they set out as "warriors," to challenge that very danger.

Finally, there is a danger of a different sort. . . . In the concluding fifth section of his essay, Buckley, discussing briefly the claim that "all the pillars of conservatism are Christian," reiterates the widely held notion that "Christian thought is Judeo-Christian in origin." Yet whatever the many other sources of Christian thought, one thing is certain: Judaism is *not* central to it, and ought not to be hyphenated with it.

Though a seeming "buzz word" in the Christian missionary creed, the term "Judeo-Christian" is not a theological axiom. And its frequent use, especially since World War II, might be—one can only speculate—a subtle attempt to remove, or at least evade, the guilt of those many Christians who not only participated in but also witnessed, in Cynthia Ozick's words—"the looting, the shooting, the herding, the forced marches, the gassing, the torching of synagogues, the cynicism, the mendacity, the shamelessness, the truncheon, the bloodthirstiness, the fanaticism, the opportunism, the dehumanization, the death factories, the obliteration of civilization, the annihilation of a people"—and, with the exception of the righteous few, did nothing. So whatever Judaism's contribution to Christianity may appear to some to be, vast, unbridgeable theological and practical differences separate the two, which, if properly understood, might help eliminate the term "Judeo-Christian" from its intolerable usage.

For, as Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik expressed it some 28 years ago in his spirited essay, "Confrontation," Judaism is a separate

> faith community; the *logos*, the word, in which the multifarious religious experience is expressed does not lend itself to standardization or universalization. The word of faith reflects the intimate, the private, the paradoxically inexpressible cravings of the individual for, and his linking up with, his Maker. It reflects the numinous character and strangeness of the act of faith of a particular community which is totally incomprehensible to the man of a different faith community. Hence, it is important that the religious or theological *logos* should not be employed as the medium of communication between two faith communities whose modes of expression are as unique as their apocalyptic experiences.

Where communication should and does exist, however, is, Rabbi Soloveitchik posits, in the realm of the purely "secular order" of things. In that "secular order," two "faith communities" must each take the initiative in formulating and, ultimately, recommending plans for the betterment of society in its pressing quest for survival. What one must nevertheless always bear in mind, notwithstanding that secular bonding, is that the "great encounter between God and man is a wholly personal and private affair incomprehensible to the outsider" and cannot, therefore, be subsumed in some tantalizing hyphenated phrase—"Judeo-Christian"—that is both theologically and historically without meaning. . . .

MAURICE WOHLGELERNTER
New York City

NORMAN PODHORETZ writes:

In this extraordinary roller-coaster of a political year, much, if not quite everything, has changed since last spring, when I wrote "Buchanan and the Conservative Crackup." At that time, Buchanan was still a salient presence on the scene and his standing among conservatives—though not, as I took pains to emphasize in the article, among Republican voters in general—was still alarmingly high. But then, with a string of very poor showings in the remaining Republican primaries, Buchanan gradually sank from view. In the meantime, H. Ross Perot had appeared, as it were out of nowhere, and proceeded to carry off most of Buchanan's supporters before fading off again into the sunset. Under these circumstances, it becomes a little difficult to recapture the emotions generated by the early Buchanan fevers on the Right.

Nevertheless, the main issue I raised—whether Buchanan was likely to become the leader of the conservative movement—is still with us. I know conservative activists who continue to think that his chances are excellent. Thanks to his campaign this year, they say, he is the front-runner for conservative leadership, with greater access to money and mailing lists than any of his rivals. I am not so sure. No doubt Buchanan will remain the darling of the paleos and other troglodytic yearners for the dark ages of American conservatism who have either blinded themselves to his anti-Semitism or are not excessively bothered by it. But now that he has failed to demonstrate much talent for attracting voters, he will probably lose most of the conservatives who supported him only for tactical reasons or as a protest against Bush.

Of these, the most important were John O'Sullivan, William F. Buckley, Jr., and their colleagues at *National Review*. In his letter, Mr. O'Sullivan gives a slightly different account from mine of how they came to endorse Buchanan in the early primaries. Having no wish to prolong the quarrel between us, I will simply say that I am sticking with my analysis. Indeed, some of the points on which Mr. O'Sullivan takes issue with me came out of conversations with him. Evidently he has forgotten saying certain things to me that I still remember.

On the question of anti-Semitism, Mr. O'Sullivan reiterates the tortured rationale under which Buckley withdrew his original charge against Buchanan. This is an argument I have by now read or heard at least four times, and it gets less convincing with each restatement.

Like Mr. O'Sullivan, Dennis E. Berger claims that Buchanan's candidacy produced good results, specifically in knocking David Duke out of the race. But I suspect that Duke only did as well as he did in the Louisiana gubernatorial campaign because of non-transportable local conditions, and that he would have flopped just as badly in the presidential race if Buchanan had never entered.

As for Israel, I agree with Mr. Berger (and E. Badian) that George Bush and James Baker have been hostile, but yes, Buchanan really has been worse, especially if we look at his attitude in the context of the offensive things he has said about American Jews and his flirtation with Holocaust revisionism. I also agree with Mr. Berger that many Democrats are friendlier to the PLO than to Israel, but in all fairness one must acknowledge that neither Bill Clinton nor Al Gore has been among them. On the contrary,

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both have made strongly pro-Israel statements. Of course, so did Bush in 1988, and so does Dan Quayle still.

A word about William J. Bennett. It is true that Bennett wants to ban assault weapons (so do I), but far from being a "social liberal," Bennett is perhaps the most courageous and articulate spokesman in this country for the conservative position on the whole range of social issues.

Dennis E. Murphy and John N. Buckley defend the America First movement against my charge that it contained anti-Semitic overtones. But I did not base this charge (which I believe most historians would accept) only on one speech by Charles Lindbergh; nor can it be refuted by the fact—a fact I myself stressed—that the movement included a number of left-wing and liberal isolationists. There was also (as John Buckley himself acknowledges) the general position of that movement in the context of the time, as well as the prominence within it of an outright anti-Semite like Father Coughlin.

Having denied that the old America First movement was what it was, Mr. Murphy not surprisingly goes on to deny that Pat Buchanan is what he is. Like Mr. Berger, who cannot distinguish between William J. Bennett and a liberal, Mr. Murphy cannot tell the difference between Irving Kristol's views on foreign policy and those of Pat Buchanan. In any case, if Buchanan is not an isolationist, a protectionist, and a nativist, and if he is indeed "a mainstream conservative," he has certainly fooled a lot of people, including a lot of genuinely mainstream conservatives.

I want to thank Elizabeth B. Lurie, Herb Greer, Wallington M. Simpson, Jr., and David C. Stolinsky for their thoughtful comments. Mrs. Lurie's letter, in particular, raises an extremely important issue that needs to be pondered and—depending on how the presidential election comes out this year—possibly acted upon.

Finally, as a postcript to Maurice Wohlgelernter's postcript, I wish to put on record my strong disagreement with him on the relation between Judaism and Christianity. Obviously there is an "unbridgeable theological" gap between the two religions; otherwise, they would be one and not two. But it is quite simply wrong to contend that "Judaism is *not* central" to Christianity, since without Judaism there would be no Christianity. It is also wrong, and deeply unjust, to suppose that the term "Judeo-Christian" represents an attempt by Christians to evade guilt over the Holocaust. If anything, as anyone who has participated in interfaith discussions can testify, the exact opposite is the case.

Israel Watch

To the Editor of Commentary:

Kudos on your new, unfortunately all too necessary, "Israel Watch" department. David Bar-Illan's inaugural column, "The Patriot Smear & Its Progeny" [June], is, as usual, excellent. There is one truly intriguing question, however, that was not considered: how much of the administration's misguided Middle East policy is anti-Israel and how much is pro-Saudi Arabia? Informed speculation has it, for example, that the Saudis were promised, as one condition for allowing us to defend them, that no further loan guarantees would be extended to Israel. That could at least partially explain administration unwillingness to take yes for an answer in connection with Israeli and congressional concessions on the loan guarantee.

As for the carefully orchestrated campaign of leaks detailing supposedly illegal Israeli technology transfers, this may well have been a preemptive strike, intended to deflect public attention from anticipated media reports of actual Saudi diversion of American arms to Iraq in 1986 and, post-Gulf War, to Syria and Bangladesh. . . .

Richard D. Wilkins
Syracuse, New York

To the Editor of Commentary:

Congratulations on the introduction of "Israel Watch." We look forward to the views of your "rotating team" of essayists in the hope that they will be as forthright in combating the ubiquitous warfare against Israel and the Jews—call it psychological, ideological, political, religious, whatever—as is David Bar-Illan. . . .

John J. Moses
West Hempstead, New York

To the Editor of Commentary:

The addition of "Israel Watch" is welcome and needed, but permit me to suggest something that is frequently overlooked.

Numerous organizations and publications properly chronicle those who are not friends of Israel and/or who dislike or even hate the Jewish people. However, few publications of which I am aware list and call for the support of Israel's friends, particularly those of us who are not Jewish, but who love Israel and the Jewish people.

As a syndicated columnist, my volume of hate mail increases whenever I write something favorable about Israel or about Jews. Most of the Jewish publications I read (it is impossible to keep track of them all, so it could be that I have missed one in which this is done) fail to list and encourage those who believe in Israel's right to exist and for the Jewish people to have a homeland within safe and secure borders.

I'm not in need of praise, but I do believe that listing and supporting Israel's friends would not only be an encouragement to us, but to Jews and non-Jews who may think that Israel has few allies outside of a tight-knit community of its own making.

Cal Thomas
Los Angeles *Times* Syndicate
Mannassas, Virginia

David Bar-Illan writes:

Richard D. Wilkins is right on target in suggesting that the Bush administration's anti-Israel actions are a function of its pro-Saudi policies. In this, it resembles the European Community more than it does most of its Washington predecessors.

The day after Yitzhak Rabin won the Israeli premiership, a high French official was asked if his government would now be more pro-Israel. "The tone may be slightly different with Rabin," he said, "but for France really to change positions, the Israelis will have to number 200 million and possess an oil-rich empire, and the Arabs will have to occupy a state the size of Wales."

This kind of amoral, cold-blooded *Realpolitik*, which proved so disastrous in the 1930's, has been embraced by the Bush administration. It animated its pro-Iraqi policies until August 1990, and it dominates its pro-Syrian, pro-Saudi policies today. At learning the lessons of history, Washington has been no better than Paris.

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Aid to Russia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

There is another precedent, aside from those so ably discussed in Martin Malia's article, "Yeltsin and Us" [April], that the United States should keep in mind in formulating assistance policies toward Russia. . . .

Communism, . . . along with its low ceiling on aspirations and possibilities, also provided a kind of safety net. Both are now gone. The people of the former Communist states have been given an opportunity to develop themselves and their lives to a degree unimaginable before, but this is an opportunity, not a guarantee. It comes with the very real danger that things could get worse, especially in the short-term transition before the institutions of freedom and the free market begin to function fully.

The problems, and the dangers, for the West arise, not from the degree to which people in the former Communist world are different from us, but from the degree to which they are the same. Many of the self-liberated countries have a trusted . . . leadership that the West seems to lack. But the question is how much time these leaders have before their people . . . run out of patience and can no longer wait for an improvement in their daily lives. Historical analogies are never exact, but there is a precedent which should help to convince us that it is in our interest to extend this time period.

In 1919 the Weimar Republic marked a new start for Germany, . . . but economic crisis hit almost immediately, drastically lowering German living standards. Political turmoil began simultaneously, as the weak new democracy came under attack from both the Right and the Left. Economic problems were so severe that even the revenge-minded French, along with the British and the increasingly isolationist Americans, agreed to a more lenient rescheduling of reparations in the 1923 Dawes Plan.

The recovery and the political peace which followed were temporary. The worldwide depression of 1929 hit Germany particularly hard, and more and more Germans lost patience with democracy and the damage it seemed to be doing to their lives. They supported a leader who made promises and delivered on them, though at a cost the Germans and the world could not have imagined. . . . The leader, of course, was Adolf Hitler.

It is not only in keeping with strong American traditions to help the former Communist states of Eastern Europe, as well as the former Soviet Union, to become prosperous, fully functioning democracies. It is also in our own self-interest.

BRUCE L. BRAGER
Arlington, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

If Martin Malia is correct in saying that Boris Yeltsin is a democrat rather than an autocrat or a Leninist, why did Yeltsin decree the merger of the USSR KGB with the USSR Ministry of the Interior, and the Russian KGB with the Russian Interior Ministry at the end of 1991? . . . And why did he reconfirm the appointment of Gorbachev's Gulf War liaison to Iraq, Yevgeny Primakov, as director of the Central Intelligence Service?

Before proceeding to help Yeltsin, the U.S. ought to consider the significance of the above, especially in the light of: (1) the reaffirmation by Yeltsin of bilateral treaties initiated by Gorbachev of "friendship and cooperation" with NATO members France, Germany, Italy, Greece, and Spain; and (2) the possibility of Russia and a host of former Soviet republics and East European countries joining an expanded European Community whose recent treaty of union declared that a qualified majority could overrule a member-state's veto. . . .

In this context, Yeltsin's assertion of February 13, 1992 that "A democratic zone of trust, cooperation, and security is being formed across the northern hemisphere" sounds neither democratic nor too Russian. It is, instead, too close for comfort to Stalin's Federated State of Europe and Gorbachev's Common European Home.

LAWRENCE KOHN
Madison, Wisconsin

MARTIN MALIA writes:

Both Bruce L. Brager and Lawrence Kohn raise doubts about the likelihood of Russia's successful transition to democracy under President Boris Yeltsin, but they do so from different perspectives. Mr. Brager sees the danger in structural factors that may be summed up as "Weimar Russia," whereas Mr. Kohn sees the danger to democracy in certain of Yeltsin's specific acts. Certainly prudence is in order in assessing Russia's prospects for democracy, but blanket skepticism just as certainly is not.

Most of Mr. Kohn's points are either trivial or hopelessly wide of the mark of reality—such as the specter of the former Soviet republics joining the European Community and overriding the vetoes of Western governments, or his comparison of Yeltsin's vague "democratic zone of trust" with Stalin's hegemonic ambitions.

His only substantive point is Yeltsin's fusion of the KGB with the Ministry of the Interior last December. While the full motivation behind this move is not clear, it seems that Yeltsin, after an initial drive to dismantle the KGB, by December came to the conclusion that with Gorbachev trying to woo the army in order to save his union, and with the possibility of civil disturbances after the price liberation set for January 1, he might need an effective police force after all. Yet, to counterbalance this force under the career policeman Viktor Baranikov, Yeltsin appointed the reformist Nikolai Fedorov as Minister of Justice. Similar considerations of expedient compromise explain Yeltsin's retention of Primakov as head of the Foreign Services of the old KGB: Primakov, after all, was the only important member of Gorbachev's entourage publicly to oppose the August putsch.

Yet over a year and a half after this police merger, it is clear that Russia is by no means becoming a police state again, that the country is as free as any other in Europe, and that the population is deeply attached to this freedom. What the Baranikov episode reveals is not incipient autocracy, but a fundamental dilemma of reform in Russia and throughout the ex-Communist world. This dilemma is that almost every adult, from the age of Yeltsin on down to that of the youthful economist Yegor Gaidar, is in some measure compromised by service to the old order, or at least molded by its values; yet it is with this human material that the new order, the hoped-for post-Soviet "normal" society, must be built. Clearly, not everyone can be purged, even in the KGB; most Communist material will have to be recycled if society is to function

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at all; and this process of phased transition will probably take a generation.

As for the "Weimar Russia" thesis, it was first launched by Gorbachev aides to frighten the West into supporting perestroika, and the danger now is that it could be used to frighten the West away from supporting a genuine Russian reform government at the moment that real transformation has at last become possible. This does not mean that there is no danger in Russia or other ex-Communist countries that the population might lose patience under present stressful circumstances and turn to a strong man. But this is not fascism. Fascism means militant and total national mobilization for foreign war. Russia is now, and will remain for the foreseeable future, too exhausted and decomposed for any such exertions. The authoritarian danger in Russia, rather, is that, if the democratic and free-market government of Yeltsin should fail, it will be succeeded by a free-market developmental dictatorship on the model of Chile's Pinochet.

Thus the Yeltsin experiment—and all involved are quite aware that it is a risky endeavor—offers the best chance of acclimating to a market democracy in Russia. Yet two dangers threaten its success. In the three years since the collapse of Communism began with the Polish elections of June 1989, it has become increasingly clear that the transition to the market is a far more intractable process than anyone had imagined. Developing a third-world country, it now seems, is a simpler task than redeveloping a mis-modernized second-world country. Russia, moreover, started out on this process some two years later than its neighbors, and the scale of all its problems is continental in comparison with theirs. It will clearly be years before the Yeltsin-Gaidar gamble pays off in a more modern economic life for the population.

A second major danger is that Russia, like all the other ex-Communist democracies, does not yet have a constitution. The existing political framework was created by a series of amendments to the Soviet Constitution of 1977, the fundamental document of a state that no longer exists. The present Russian Congress of People's Deputies, together with its Supreme Soviet, was elected by a semi-rigged suffrage in March 1990 and has a Communist plurality. Yeltsin was elected by universal suffrage in June 1991 on an explicitly anti-Communist, anti-Soviet platform. The cohabitation of these two political forces has been tense and turbulent, and, after this spring's conflict between them over the Gaidar reforms, it is clear that a major constitutional crisis is not far off.

Yeltsin wants strong executive authority in order to continue the present economic course, and a new constitution to institutionalize such powers. The Congress wants a parliamentary regime and a more gradualist economic policy. Executive dissolution of the Congress is a distinct possibility, together with a referendum on a new presidential constitution, for which both the U.S. and France furnish precedents. In this event, the most likely outcome would be a Gaullist-type republic in Russia; and indeed, de Gaulle is often cited in Yeltsin's entourage as an appropriate model, just as he is around Walesa in Poland.

Such a solution might well not be Jeffersonian in its temper, but it is clearly within the range of democratic alternatives, quite far removed from Pinochet and still more from Weimar's twilight. And Yeltsin has shown himself to be as scrupulously respectful of universal suffrage as was de Gaulle. Moreover, whatever constitution does emerge next in Russia will no doubt turn out to be provisional.

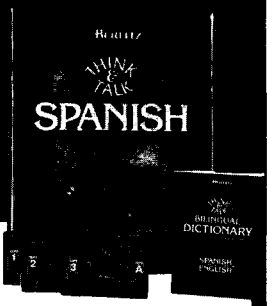
It will take as many years for stable democratic polities to develop in the ex-Soviet countries as it will for functioning market economies to emerge. The West cannot help being involved in both endeavors, if only out of Western self-interest. But we should do so without illusions, and brace for a very long haul.

Lucy S. Dawidowicz

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Neal Kozodoy's "In Memoriam: Lucy S. Dawidowicz" [May] raises some troubling questions. Mr. Kozodoy states that Lucy Dawidowicz categorically repudiated

"They couldn't believe an American actually spoke their language."



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the charge of collective passivity and collusion on the part of European Jewry during the Holocaust. Surely, there is a world of difference between passivity and treachery. If we are not to distinguish between victimization and collaboration, what do we have left of morality?

More puzzling is Mrs. Dawidowicz's exculpation of American Jews during the Holocaust. Mr. Kozodoy writes, ". . . the point, for someone like her, had been to commit every . . . resource to defeat the fury. . . ." This failed to take into account the real situation facing the Jews of Europe. While the Germans were trying to kill every Jew, the British were determined that Jews not leave Europe for Palestine. The Roosevelt administration acquiesced in this policy. The best hope for changing British policy was to pressure Roosevelt to prevail upon the British to stop blocking rescue efforts. This did not happen. David Wyman, the author of *The Abandonment of the Jews*, has estimated that as many as a million Jews could have been saved had the allies pursued a vigorous effort. In practical terms, the initiative for such an effort had to come from American Jews. It did not.

ROBERT WEINTRAUB
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

One did not have to know the late Lucy S. Dawidowicz to admire her work and treasure her incredible intellectual powers.

Neal Kozodoy's piece only made me love her.

MARTIN S. GOLDMAN
Sudbury, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was touched beyond measure by Neal Kozodoy's warm and affectionate tribute to the late Lucy S. Dawidowicz. . . . I remember Lucy Dawidowicz from her rare appearances in Montreal when I was privileged to listen to her and come to know her. . . . Her burning love for Jewish history, Jewish literature, and Jewish lore touched and enriched our souls and minds; her love for the Jewish people knew no borders. She was one of the most powerful and staunch defenders and promoters of the Yiddish language, Yiddish literature, the Jewish heritage, and above all Jewish dignity. She tried to create a bridge between past and present, between the old world and the new, between East European Jewry and American Jewry, reconciling tradition with modernity, preserving the wholeness and self-esteem of Jewish life. . . .

Lucy Dawidowicz is still living among us, . . . her legacy will always remain with us and will provide a powerful impulse to continue her unfinished task. . . .

BARUCH COHEN
Montreal, Canada

NEAL KOZODOY writes:

I don't recognize Robert Weintraub's imputed linkage of "passivity and collusion," "passivity and treachery," "victimization and collaboration" in my summary of Lucy S. Dawidowicz's writings, and it is certainly not present in those writings themselves. That all European Jews were victims is true by definition; that a tiny handful cooperated is undeniable; that all the victims were passive, *or* that all could somehow be said to have colluded in their fate, is false. That is why I wrote, qualifying I think accurately, that Mrs. Dawidowicz "categorically repudiated the charge of *collective* passivity, *let alone* of collusion" (emphasis added).

As for the behavior of American Jews during the Holocaust, this is a much-controverted issue on which Mrs. Dawidowicz's strongly argued position needs to be read to be appreciated; I would urge Mr. Weintraub to consider in particular her critical essay on David Wyman's book (reprinted in *What Is the Use of Jewish History?*, forthcoming from Schocken).

It is not for me to thank Martin S. Goldman and Baruch Cohen. Their letters, along with the numerous private notes I received from others of Mrs. Dawidowicz's bereft friends and admirers, go some way toward suggesting the greatness of her presence and her influence.

"A Purim Homily"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Did Ruth R. Wisse write her article, "A Purim Homily" [May], while actively celebrating that boisterous holiday? How else can one account for the wild speculations emanating from this usually sober and reliable contributor?

What qualifies her to speculate from her distant and foreign perch on the motives and actions of the American diplomats "known to some" (who?) as the "Four Jewish Horsemen of the Apocalypse." I have known one of them, Daniel Kurtzer, a religiously observant Jew, for 25 years, during the last 15 of which he has provided distinguished service to the United States of America in its Foreign Service while rising to his current position as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs.

The same Daniel Kurtzer who is "centrally involved in the making of policy toward Israel in the administration of George Bush" was also centrally involved in the making of policy toward Israel in the administration of Ronald Reagan. Surely Mrs. Wisse wasn't questioning his loyalty then. The American Jewish community is fortunate that people of the caliber of Daniel Kurtzer have decided to devote their careers to public service, proud of their Jewishness and dedicated to their oath of office. More attacks like the one you printed might make them decide that it isn't worth it.

If Israel were truly facing an immediate threat similar to the one faced by the Jews of Persia, our community would be blessed to have someone like Daniel Kurtzer in a position of influence. One hopes that Mrs. Wisse can distinguish between a difference of opinion on policy and an implication of Jewish treason.

MORTON LANDOWNE
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Ruth R. Wisse, recalling how Jews who were highly placed in the government of ancient Persia risked themselves in order to save the Jewish people, notes that there are four Jews involved in the drafting of the Bush administration's Middle East policies, and wonders if they would act "on behalf of the threatened Jewish polity of today."

The answer, sadly, is that not only have they not intervened on Israel's behalf but they have in fact acted to harm the Jewish state. If Daniel Kurtzer, Aaron Miller, Dennis Ross, and Richard Haass are today known around the capital as the State Department's Jewish Arabists, it is for good reason.

According to the New York *Times*, Kurtzer spent much of 1988 trying to persuade his superiors

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that Yasir Arafat was becoming more "moderate"; when he succeeded, Kurtzer himself reportedly wrote the text of the U.S. statement recognizing the PLO. Kurtzer's underlying conviction is that Israel is to blame for the Middle East conflict. The theme of his doctoral dissertation, at Columbia University, was that Israeli raids against Arab terrorists were responsible for "radicalizing" the terrorists and making things worse. Kurtzer's contemptuous attitude toward Israel is evident from his description of his job as "grabbing an Israeli and grabbing an Arab and bringing them together and then holding them until they talk to each other."

His colleague, Aaron Miller, has expressed similar contempt for the Israelis. Earlier this year, he is said to have told a member of the Israeli parliament: "I speak to Israelis the way I speak to my own children."

Dennis Ross, for his part, is reported to have written Secretary Baker's rancorous speech demanding that Jews "give up the dream of a 'Greater Israel.'" Some media reports have cited Ross as the probable source of the leaking of false allegations about Israel transferring U.S. technology to China. Haass, meanwhile, is said to have formulated President Bush's infamous statement about Jewish lobbyists besieging Washington. During a meeting in March with delegates from my organization, the Zionist Organization of America, Haass was questioned about his role in drafting that statement; he gave an evasive reply.

No, Mrs. Wisse, there are no Mordecais or Queen Esthers in the Bush administration nor, for that matter, do there seem to be any Harry Trumans or George Shultzes.

MICHAEL GOLDBLATT
Philadelphia Chapter
Zionist Organization of America
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Ruth R. Wisse rues the refusal of President Bush's Jewish advisers to follow in the footsteps of their Persian ancestors and intervene to spare Jewry (in today's case, the state of Israel) from harm.

Mrs. Wisse's complaint is certainly justified, but one important difference between ancient Persia and contemporary America deserves to be underlined. Persian Jews could not vote Haman out of office; American Jews, by contrast, are numerous enough in the key electoral states to carry weight in the forthcoming presidential election. . . .

RUTH KING
Jewish Election Committee
New York City

RUTH R. WISSE writes:

What qualifies me to speak from my distant and foreign perch about the actions of American diplomats and Jews is the same civic duty that should impel every citizen. I don't care about Daniel Kurtzer's motives and still less about his observance; the anti-Zionist Neturei Karta are surely more observant than he, yet I wouldn't trust one of them in the administration either. What matters deeply—and should on moral grounds matter to Morton Landowne even more than his otherwise commendable loyalty to a friend—is the ability of Israel to withstand the stated Arab intention of destroying it.

The four Jews in the Bush administration boast of their even-handed approach to what is now commonly called the Arab-Israeli conflict. Indeed, a recent *Newsweek* article says approvingly that they came to believe long ago "that the Arab-Israeli conflict is not a morality play, not a conflict between good and evil. It is a conflict between competing claims and competing justices." Yet according to the Arab sense of justice, Israel does not belong on the map. The Arab war against the Jews rests on the "claims" that Jewish nationalism is racist by definition, that the Jewish state is illegitimate, that Jews occupy land at the expense of the Arab people, and that the war to destroy the Jewish state is a sacred duty, if not a holy mission.

Those who work in the Bush administration have had ample evidence of this Arab sense of honor and justice, in deeds and in words, yet it does not appear to disturb their respect for most Arab rulers. This willingness of an American administration to overlook Arab anti-Semitism as though it were no impediment to doing normal business is the most reprehensible feature of its Middle East policy.

The point of my Purim homily was that the Arab war against Israel, though hardly a play, is very much a moral struggle, not between equal claims and equal justices but between a very powerful, complex, and determined people that seeks to destroy the Jewish polity, or to cripple it as a prelude to its destruction, and the Jews who intend to protect that polity. On the Jewish side there is democracy, tolerance of pluralism, implicit acceptance of regional diplomacy. On the other side there is—at best—benevolent despotism, and propagation of Jew-hatred as a national and religious ideology. If one has any respect for the Arabs, one should certainly do them the courtesy of acknowledging their view of the world. But to accept this view of the world as though it were morally unexceptional is to sacrifice every principle of democracy and international law.

Michael Goldblatt's letter speaks for itself, although even without going behind the scenes, so does the record of the Bush-Baker administration. Ruth King raises the issue of the current electoral campaign, which has so far demonstrated how little American voters think they can trust the candidates of either major party. But at least we should know what we seek from a new Middle East policy: belated, unconditional recognition of Israel on the part of each and every Arab country; immediate cessation of the economic boycott; an end to all propaganda against the Jewish state and against its Jewish supporters; adherence by Egypt to all the terms of the Camp David agreement; regional cooperation on the water supply and other ecological issues; and, not least, a pan-Arab fund and political program for the resettlement of Arab refugees, including educational and cultural facilities. One would have thought that President Bush's advisers would have promoted such a program, not because it benefits the Jews but because it alone can put an end to the "Arab-Israeli conflict."

"Circa 1492"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

For one who writes on politics and culture, the necessity of combining the two must be the *sine qua non* of his profession; otherwise, it is difficult to understand the rationale of Richard Ryan's article on the "Circa 1492" exhibition at the National Gallery in

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Washington, D.C. ["1492 and All That," May]. Most of the arguments seem to reflect Mr. Ryan's personal tastes, and the questions he raises neither concern nor are relevant to the general public, nor, for that matter, to a more informed audience.

Of the "Circa 1492" exhibition, Mr. Ryan notes: "Full-page advertisements . . . ran in newspapers around the country; the usual cottage industry of calendars and gift cards was quickly in evidence." Yes, in order to make the public aware of an important exhibition, advertising is a necessity in the modern museum world which endeavors to cater to "capacity crowds" rather than to a small elite. The "blockbuster" exhibition is a highly debatable topic among museum directors and curators, but a good many of these exhibitions have become landmarks of museum achievement in curatorship and scholarship. They provide the public with an opportunity to view works within contexts previously unknown and see art that it would otherwise have no occasion to see at all. . . . To shrug off the "mammoth" exhibition altogether and absolutely is, at the very least, short-sighted. . . .

Yet it is not so much the highbrow cliché criticism of the modern museum that is disturbing; rather, it is the imposition of multiculturalist binoculars on the "Circa 1492" exhibition itself. . . . Barely have we gotten rid of Marxist art criticism than we are presented with a critic's need to analyze an exhibition through another mode. Mr. Ryan points out that the show's curators raise issues which they do not then go on to address. He is right: exhibitions, when they are good, do raise a lot of issues, and "Circa 1492" definitely brought to the surface more important questions than the few Mr. Ryan chose to focus on. However, the expectation that an exhibition must answer questions is totally misleading and has resulted in exhibitions, like that on degenerate art, in which totalitarian regimes provided the public with all the answers.

The catalogue of "Circa 1492" at no point raised the issue of multiculturalism, and, to the best of my knowledge, the term was not mentioned anywhere in the voluminous text. I also found no evidence that the exhibition claimed to instigate or stimulate a "politically-acceptable debate" on the topic.

Why could Mr. Ryan not take this exhibition at face value? As J. Carter Brown pointed out in the foreword to the catalogue, this was one of the most exciting periods in history, the beginning of a globalism that is now increasingly recognized. "Circa 1492" examined, first of all, the ethos of a Mediterranean world in which, with a new vibrancy and energy, mankind was searching to understand its place in relation to this earth. . . . The exhibition then went on to explore many other issues as spelled out by Brown in his introduction and by the often brilliant essays by scholars contained in the impressive catalogue.

Mounting an exhibition which endeavors to freeze a moment in time and illustrate its characteristics through material culture is a device that has been undertaken before, but never on such a grand scale and with such richness and abundance of works of art as in this show. A horizontal slice of history like this is definitely an eye-opener for the visitor; the unusual juxtapositions and groupings open a window to ideas and vistas of which the viewer was not previously aware.

Mr. Ryan dedicates nearly a third of his article to a review of a totally different exhibition, "Resplendence of the Spanish Monarchy," which was held at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. In comparing it to the National Gallery's monumental exhibition (which is like comparing apples and pears), and in his preoccupation with trivia (calendars and gift cards), he misses the considerable achievements of "Circa 1492." By criticizing J. Carter Brown for his admiration of a bronze female head from Benin featured in the exhibition, Mr. Ryan denies the right to make discriminations of taste. And in his attempt to interject a political debate on multiculturalism into the context of the exhibition, he spoils the pleasure of the spontaneous art lover and museumgoer.

MARTIN WEYL
Director, The Israel Museum
Jerusalem, Israel

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Richard Ryan's assertion that the theory of multiculturalism considers all cultures morally equivalent is incorrect. Multiculturalists do not consider all societies and cultures to be morally equivalent; they consider European-based societies and cultures to be morally inferior. The problem with multiculturalism does not lie in its refusal to make moral judgments; it is, rather, that the ones it makes are misinformed.

DAVID VOGEL
University of California
Berkeley, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Richard Ryan's article takes the National Gallery's "Circa 1492" exhibition to task for its failure of Eurocentric nerve. How could anyone who displays Leonardo's *Portrait of a Lady with an Ermine (Cecilia Gallerani)* as a climactic icon of Western Renaissance art and science neglect to add that Western art and science have peacefully conquered the world?

Far be it from me to contest either Mr. Ryan's premise or his conclusion. But there is something gravely wrong, something un-Western, about the portrait's title. The animal is not an ermine. An ermine is a small weasel species, *Mustela erminea*, in winter coat. Ermines are tiny, skinny, and snow-white—ten inches long, head and body, an inch or so in diameter, rarely more than a pound in weight. Ermines are wild. A real ermine would have bitten Gallerani. The animal portrayed is too large, too tame, and the wrong color, to pass as an ermine. Relative to the lady, it is as long as, and almost as robust as, the cat depicted in Leonardo's *Madonna with Cat*—that is, perhaps fourteen inches long, and three or four pounds in weight. It is cream-colored, and tame enough to hold. These features say the animal is a good-sized domestic male European ferret, *Mustela putorius furo*.

Does it really matter if the name is not quite right? If it doesn't, then the Renaissance doesn't matter, either. Getting things exactly right, or at least trying to, was what the Renaissance was all about. It was certainly what Leonardo, the naturalist and anatomist, was all about. He may never have seen a live ermine, since their range is far north of Italy, but he knew that weasels are tiny (see fol. 67, v-d, of the *Codex Atlanticus*), and he must have known from ermine

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pelts in costumes that they are snow-white, except for their black-tipped tail. As a painter who made his own brushes, he may have been especially aware of differences between one mustelid species and another, since only three species have a pelage long enough, and springy enough, to make top-grade brushes.

The false title has certainly befuddled art critics. Garry Wills in the *New York Review of Books* makes much of the "use of ermine for painters' brushes," and the resemblance between the lady's name, Gallerani, and the Greek word for weasel, *galee*. Other commentators note that Ludovico Sforza's emblem was the ermine and suggest that Leonardo was applauding Ludovico by showing an ermine enjoying his mistress's caress. But *galee* can mean ferret as well as weasel; ermine is not, in fact, used in painters' brushes; and it is hardly a compliment to Ludovico if "the embosomed ermine with its aura of sexual energy" turns out to be an impostor, a shifty-eyed male ferret playing the title role.

Let us acknowledge that the age of 1492 was glorious, and the "ermine portrait" its fitting icon. We should be grateful to the National Gallery and the critics for highlighting the portrait and making it a household image. Mr. Ryan argues that the highlighting is too grudging for a portrait which embodies and presages the "peaceful conquest of the world by Western ideas." If so, it would seem doubly appropriate, when we celebrate the quincentennium of the icon, that we call it by its proper name.

WARD ELLIOTT
Claremont McKenna College
Claremont, California

RICHARD RYAN writes:

Martin Weyl's response to my critique of the National Gallery's misguided megashow denies the importance of the issues I raised. Commercialization, indiscriminate popularizing, unspoken political bias are, in fact, issues central to curatorship. Mr. Weyl seems to believe that these topics "neither concern nor are relevant to the general public, nor . . . to a more informed audience." I am surprised that he takes such a dim view of the potential subtlety and interests of museumgoers.

One of the significant tasks of art criticism is to encourage a politically informed response to art. A second and related task is to disclose how museums shape our understanding of the social conditions under which various cultures have expressed themselves aesthetically. A more careful reader than Mr. Weyl will have noticed that in my article I did not claim that the National Gallery had tried to impose a politically-correct viewpoint on the museumgoer. Rather, I argued that the curators of "Circa 1492," intimidated by the fashionable forces of cultural relativism, backed away from the sort of cross-cultural comparisons that their show's global scope explicitly demanded.

I am certainly grateful for the chance to have seen the myriad beautiful works that the National Gallery gathered from around the world. I remain convinced, however, that by treating all cultures as aesthetic equals, J. Carter Brown *et al.* avoided obvious hierarchies of value and played it entirely too safe. I never wanted the National Gallery to dictate cultural preferences to the populace (far be it from me to deny anyone's "right" to enjoy mediocre Benin sculpture). I simply suggested that the National Gallery might have worked harder to create an atmosphere in which, free from intimidating intellectual fashions, members of the public could have developed such preferences on their own.

David Vogel, having the mixed fortune to work in the beautiful but schismatic city of Berkeley, is subject to a more virulent strain of multiculturalism than many of us. Obviously, multiculturalism is neither monolithic nor consistently defined, in part because the movement has become a Trojan horse for other more radical intellectual programs.

To reiterate and clarify: some multiculturalists are simply liberal cultural pluralists, whose views I mostly endorse. Then there are the cultural relativists (who have dominated the multicultural movement), led in this country by Barbara Herrnstein Smith and Stanley Fish. The relativists are typically post-structural scholars and critics who coddle primitive or backward

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societies by denying the objective authority of Western values and evaluations. This relativistic multiculturalism, as I indicated in my article, set the tone for the National Gallery's exhibit. Finally, there are reverse racists who treat multiculturalism as a platform for proclaiming the moral superiority of non-Western cultures and races. The racists are particularly offensive, but I did not detect their presence at the 1492 exhibit.

On to a different identity problem: I have to disagree, though hesitantly, with Ward Elliott's intriguing taxonomic response to my article. I find that Martin Kemp, in his note to the painting in the "Circa 1492" catalogue, anticipates Mr. Elliott's analysis, and responds that "the unnaturally large scale of the ermine . . . may be compared to the exaggerated size of the babies in Leonardo's Madonna and Child compositions." Kemp also acknowledges, however, that scholars such as Lorne Campbell (in *Renaissance Portraits*) regard the creature as a ferret.

Nowhere in the painter's notebooks have I been able to find a reference to *furreti*. Leonardo may have associated ferrets generically with weasels; in any case, his knowledge of the latter animal seems to derive from folk wisdom rather than scientific observation. For instance, he says that a weasel (*donnola*) will hunt basilisks, and kill them by "spreading [its urine] about and the smell of this urine often kills the weasel itself." These comments do not demonstrate the zoologically acute grasp of the genus *Mustela* which Mr. Elliott would like to grant the painter.

Leonardo did seem to know something about ermines, however, and would have disagreed with Mr. Elliott's assertion that they are not of Italian origin. In his topographic notes he places their breeding ground in the snow-covered Bormio mountains, not more than 150 kilometers northeast of Milan. Perhaps their range has receded since the days of Leonardo and Ludovico.

Objections to the ermine identification are based on the animal's unseemly size and color. The distortion may be attributable to Leonardo's use of dramatic foreshortening. Lorne Campbell observes that the sitter's hand is unusually large, and the exaggeration of the hand and animal together does seem to heighten the painting's vivid multi-dimensional effect. The beast appears ready to spring from her arms into ours.

The whole matter of "natural" proportion is settled for me by the painter's "Leda" studies (see, for example, the Popham edition of the drawings, plate 208, tentatively dated 1510). In the extant sketches and drawings the bird is enormous, with fantastic musculature and bulk, distinctly unlike that of an actual swan. The deviation is understandable: a bird would have to be supernaturally large to embody a god, just as an ermine would have to be disproportionately large to embody a duke.

The color problem, on the other hand, is troubling, since the animal is more a creamy yellow than a snowy white, and as Leonardo himself writes, "The ermine [*ermellino*] would rather die than soil itself." If only its tail were visible, the presence or absence of the black tip would settle the question.

Nevertheless, as long as we continue to accept (as we do for good technical reasons I will brush past here) that this is a portrait of Cecilia Gallerani, the mistress of Duke Ludovico Sforza, who took ermines as his emblem, I must tilt toward the ermine identification. Mr. Elliott and Mr. Campbell embrace the "ferret conjecture" because they emphasize Leonardo's naturalism at the expense of his iconology. Ermines carried deep meaning for Leonardo and his patron, and unless the good professor can offer more evidence, I resist. A Lady with an Ermine she remains.

Carl Sandburg

To the Editor of Commentary:

. . . Joseph Epstein's point in "The People's Poet" [May] that Carl Sandburg is not read by young people these days is more a comment on the reading habits of the young, such as they are, than on Sandburg. Want proof? Go looking for a complete bookstore these days. There are a few, but only a few, and outside of New York City, very few.

Next, Mr. Epstein seems to have trouble with Sandburg's enormous popularity as a poet and the fact that he made a lot of money. . . . Perhaps he would prefer the world for poets as it is today. Almost none can earn a living as a poet, usually retreating to campuses where they teach and publish in obscure magazines with minuscule circulations comprised of other poets, academicians, and a few turned-off souls. . . . Features of poetry today are often lack of discipline, needless obfuscation, and ill-directed anger. At the very least, Sandburg can be understood. . . .

Reading Mr. Epstein's article prompted me to hunt around for my old copy of Sandburg's biography of Lincoln. Still seems like a pretty good book to me.

Max Charleston
Olney, Maryland

To the Editor of Commentary:

. . . I have nothing of cosmic or near-cosmic significance to add to Joseph Epstein's article on Carl Sandburg, but I read it alternating between laughter and the kind of "right on!" noises someone makes who has finally seen the truth told about a load of sacred bull. . . .

I was one of the generation to whom Sandburg's poetry was force-fed, labeled as certified grade-A, USDA prime literature. In high school, where it was often intoned, I got into trouble by saying I thought most of Sandburg's stuff was goofy and that the one about the fog and the little cat feet was just dumb. I learned to shut up after that—even when, in later years, friends played records of the great man singing (sort of) such lines as "I had a horse and his name was Bill and when he ran he couldn't stand still." I went along with the reverence.

So, thanks. I have only one thing to add: has anyone ever noticed how much the late great mountebank, Andy Warhol, looked like Sandburg?

Saul David
Van Nuys, California

Affirmative Action

To the Editor of Commentary:

I was glad to learn that Timothy Maguire ["My Bout With Affirmative Action," April], who caused consternation in the Washington area by his "revelations" that the Georgetown Law Center not only engaged in affirmative action, but also had quotas, has landed on his feet. . . . I would like to add some footnotes to Mr. Maguire's informative article.

After several weeks of trying to

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keep the Law Center's practices and handling of the matter intramural, Dean Judith Areen finally went public in an unusually long op-ed piece in—where else?—the liberal Washington *Post* of Sunday, May 26, 1991. (I mention the day of the week only because the Sunday edition is the one most widely read.) The *Post*, of course, was at all times sympathetic to Dean Areen and the Law Center's practices. . . .

In her statement . . . Dean Areen proudly proclaimed that in selecting 625 lucky students for admission out of the 9,000 applications received at Georgetown, LSAT scores and college grades are not major considerations. Rather, "diversity" is the key, with race and ethnicity "playing a central role." Diversity, however, is not limited to race and ethnicity; there is also "diversity of gender, age, geography as well as individual accomplishments of all kinds." Among such "accomplishments" are overcoming disability or poverty or educational adversity or difficult family problems. . . .

Dean Areen maintained that there has been "no conflict between diversity and academic excellence, . . ." and that "the achievements of our graduates attest to the success of our admission policy and academic program." But instead of citing facts and figures to support this conclusion, she simply proclaimed that the school's policy "is morally correct, benefits all our students, improves the quality of the education we provide, and serves the nation and the bar as well." . . .

Of particular interest was Dean Areen's concession that the subject raises important issues for Georgetown and the nation. She announced that she had appointed a "Task Force on Community and Diversity" (with names carefully omitted) "to promote full and open discussion of the matter," and reiterated in conclusion that "our affirmative-action commitment . . . will not waver." . . .

The appointment of such a task force under the circumstances would appear to be superfluous, and attempts to reason with Dean Areen's mindset would appear to be wasted effort. I would say that Mr. Maguire's mission is by no means finished and the admission policies of all major law schools could stand closer scrutiny.

ROBERT J. ROSENTHAL
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Timothy Maguire's article is typical of the victim-of-the-politically-correct-liberal-establishment wing of social commentary begun with that fearless crusader for American values, Dinesh D'Souza. Although the article is long on personal complaints, it admittedly contains serious questions regarding the ultimate effectiveness of affirmative-action programs, and whether pragmatism should take precedence over ideology in crafting such programs.

Unfortunately, Mr. Maguire's lack of a serious alternative to the current system calls into question whether he has the best interests of all involved at heart, or is simply content with displaying his dirty laundry before a national audience. For instance, after glossing over the criteria involved in current selection processes, he contends that law-school administrators are creating "student bodies unrepresentative of the American population." The suggestion that minority students are somehow bound to the values of the administrators who admitted them is condescending and irresponsible. . . . Ironically, Mr. Maguire might be implicitly suggesting that programs which promote balanced racial representation should be scrapped in favor of policies that institute affirmative action for conservatives! . . .

I believe it is all right to criticize and modify a policy that produces alienation in the group it most seeks to benefit; however, it is equally ill-conceived to think that educational disparities can be solved by law-school Social Darwinism. This condones the endless cycle of elite prep school to elite undergraduate institution to elite law school that ultimately condemns minorities to second-class status. It is therefore incumbent upon the critic of affirmative action to develop policies to reduce the inequities that separate our suburban (predominantly white) and urban (predominantly black and Hispanic) schools. If this can be accomplished, affirmative action can become a thing of the past, rather than a necessary evil.

BRETT NORBRATEN
Georgetown, Texas

TIMOTHY MAGUIRE writes:

As Robert J. Rosenthal's letter demonstrates, law-school administrators do not merely defend affirmative action by asserting a need for more black lawyers. Instead, they claim all manner of superficially attractive justifications for "diversity." One of these is that the law-school community should reflect the larger national community. I say only that since law-school communities do not reflect the national community in ideology, class, or cultural values, why must they do so in relation to race? If blacks, conservatives, Idaho farm boys, poor immigrants, or self-made entrepreneurs can make unique contributions to a student body *and* have academic credentials which suggest they will compete successfully in class, they should *all* be considered more carefully than the archetypal white male prep-school graduates. However, unlike Brett Norbraten, I see no "pragmatism" in affirmative-action policies that lead law schools to admit persons who will routinely be outperformed by their fellow students.

Nor do I suggest that minority students are "somehow bound" to the views of administrators. But, unfortunately, students of all races and both genders hew to the liberal orthodoxy which is pervasive at prestigious law schools—and often for reasons unrelated to the merits of liberalism. Common are stories such as that of one of my Georgetown law classmates—a black conservative—who feared openly criticizing affirmative action because "my black friends would throw stones at me."

Finally, I can best answer Mr. Norbraten's well-meant call for critics of affirmative action to offer alternatives by repeating the response Thomas Sowell (in his book, *Preferential Policies: An International Perspective*) offers when asked this question: "No one who extinguishes a forest fire or removes a cancer has to 'replace' it with anything. We are well rid of evils."

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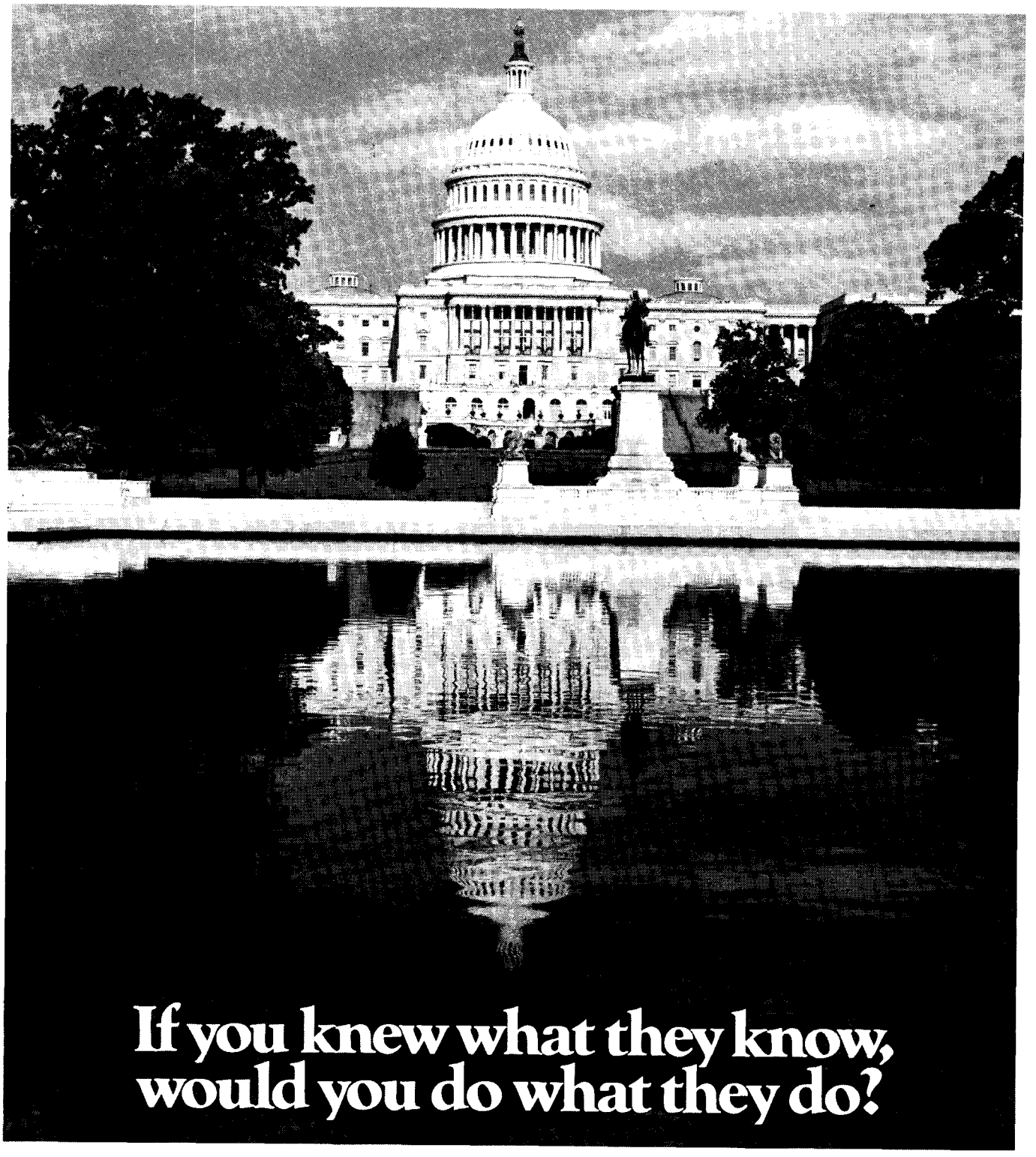

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Have the Democrats Really Changed?

A Debate

Richard Schifter/Thomas Sowell

There has been much talk of a possible move toward support of the Clinton-Gore ticket by many so-called Reagan Democrats and neoconservative intellectuals who have become increasingly unhappy with the Bush administration. Some, indeed, have already made the move. Others remain unconvinced that the Democratic party has really freed itself from the leftist forces whose accession to power in 1972 drove them out in the first place.

Among the most prominent of the "old-time" Democrats now coming home to the party is RICHARD SCHIFTER, *who served as Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs from 1985 to 1992. Mr. Schifter here explains why he believes that Governor Clinton has earned the renewed backing of the traditional Democratic constituency. But to* THOMAS SOWELL, *a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford, the changes in the Democratic party are nothing but a form of election-year camouflage, and he makes the case for supporting George Bush. The President, Mr. Sowell argues, may be "the lesser of two evils," but he is the lesser "by a considerable margin."*

Richard Schifter: The 1992 Democratic party, led by Governor Bill Clinton and Senator Al Gore, has shed its leftist fads and is once again appealing to the American mainstream. The question which some voters might ask is whether the new approach is a mere façade (a "Trojan horse") or whether a fundamental change in direction has taken place, which brings the party back to where it was prior to 1972. I believe that the change is genuine, that Governor Clinton has succeeded in sidelining the left-wing activist minority which for years has put its stamp on the national Democratic party. In doing so, he is returning the Democratic party to the foreign and domestic policies initiated by Presidents Woodrow Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Harry Truman.

In his message to Congress in April 1917, President Wilson called upon the country to fight

> for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own governments, for the rights and liberties of small nations, for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free.

The ideas set forth by Wilson in that message remained alive in spite of his failure at Versailles and his inability to persuade the U.S. Senate to allow the United States to join the League of Nations. Wilsonian internationalism inspired Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry Truman. Roosevelt led the Allied war effort which defeated Hitler, but the task of dealing with the postwar world fell to Truman. And it was Truman who succeeded where Wilson had failed. Forty-five years ago he laid the foundation for a United States policy consistent with Wilson's goals, a policy designed to protect the free world against totalitarian encroachment.

Truman's effort began with his appeal to Congress, in 1947, to assist Greece and Turkey against Soviet efforts at subversion. It continued with the Marshall Plan, which rebuilt the economies of Western Europe, with the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), with the international development assistance program, and with the decision to use our military strength to repel the North Korean invasion of South Korea. As formulated in the years 1947-50, the Truman foreign-policy approach guided the United States for more than four decades and ultimately proved resoundingly successful.

In the late 40's, most of the opposition to Truman's foreign policy came from the Republican Right, led by Senator Robert Taft of Ohio,

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which rejected Truman's "globaloney." There was also a Left opposition, which urged accommodation to the aspirations of Stalin's Soviet Union. Unable to gain a significant foothold in the Democratic party, these supporters of accommodation, heavily influenced by the then still effective Communist party of the United States, created for the 1948 election the Progressive party, which nominated former Vice President Henry Wallace for President.

Truman's surprise victory in the 1948 election fully vindicated his Wilsonian internationalist foreign policy. Four years later, Robert Taft was defeated in his bid for the Republican presidential nomination by Dwight Eisenhower, who was committed to continuing the Truman foreign policy. Bipartisan support of Wilsonian internationalism thus seemed assured.

The war in Vietnam tore this overwhelming majority consensus to shreds. In the wake of that war, many erstwhile supporters of the Truman policies reconsidered their position in its entirety and—joining hands with the New Left of the 60's—urged a less activist foreign policy and acquiescence in the worldwide expansion of the Communist sphere of control and influence. By 1972 these advocates of accommodation and isolationism had not only won a foothold in the Democratic party but were able to garner a majority at the Democratic national convention.

This radical change in the foreign-policy outlook of the national Democratic party was matched by an equally radical change in its domestic-policy outlook. The Democratic party of Roosevelt and Truman had been committed to job creation and economic growth. New Dealers had been proud of having substituted work relief for the dole. "A rising tide lifts all boats," had been the way President John F. Kennedy put it a generation later. But the New Left strain which now expressed itself in the Democratic party rejected economic growth, derided "unfulfilling, dead-end jobs," and advocated redistributionist measures as the only appropriate solution to the problems of poverty.

These leftists also opposed the traditional liberal ideal of a color-blind society and called for aid programs based on race rather than need. Instead of seeking to improve public services, they advocated so-called "community-action programs," which allowed a handful of radical activists, with insignificant community support, to advance personal agendas that had little, if anything, to do with the needs of the poor.

THE result of this change in direction of the Democratic party was the rejection of the national ticket by a large segment of the traditional Democratic constituency: blue-collar workers and the lower middle class. In spite of the continuation of the unpopular war in Vietnam and the unattractiveness of the Republican candidate, the Democratic national ticket in 1972 registered the lowest percentage of the popular vote since 1924 (when LaFollette's Progressive-party candidacy siphoned off a large percentage of Democrats) and the lowest percentage in the electoral college since the emergence of the Republican party.

Many traditional Democrats did not abandon the party entirely. If candidates for Congress, state, or local office supported traditional Democratic ideas, they stayed with them. It was the impression left by the national conventions that turned off these traditional Democrats. And so, for the last 24 years we have had divided government: 20 years of Republican control of the presidency, 24 years of Democratic control of the House, and 18 years of Democratic control of the Senate. When Americans have voted for President they have registered their concern about the leftists who have asserted themselves quadrennially at the Democratic national convention, who have appropriated the term "liberal," and have caused old-time liberals to be dubbed "neoconservatives." Even in 1976, in the aftermath of Watergate and running against an unelected incumbent President, the Democratic candidate won just barely.

The altered character of the Democratic national conventions stemmed from the disintegration of the party organizations and the change in the system of electing delegates. Since the days of Andrew Jackson, patronage and favors, sometimes also illegal favors, had been the lifeblood of our political parties, giving rise to a profession of party functionaries who had a very personal stake in winning elections: victory provided them with their bread and butter. The creation and expansion of the civil service, competitive bidding requirements for government contracts, social-security and welfare payments, and increasingly rigid rules against conflicts of interest drained that lifeblood from the party organizations. Increasingly political work passed into the hands of volunteers.

Political volunteer activity is an upper-middle-class sport. Volunteer activists are, typically, college graduates who have the time and the resources to work on political campaigns. Most members of this group have tended toward conservatism and have constituted the natural support of the Republican party. Their Democratic counterparts, smaller in numbers, were relatively new to the role of party leaders, having replaced the local bosses.

As distinct from the Republican leaders, who reflected the mainstream of their party, the new Democratic leaders held positions to the Left of a substantial portion of their political base. Moreover, the Democratic party attracted a small but extremely active and vocal group, very often young people who were the children of well-to-do parents, and who engaged in political work on

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single issues associated with the Left fringe and far removed from the concerns of the Democratic party's traditional base. Through primaries and caucuses, in which only a small percentage of the electorate participated, they were able to exert a disproportionately large influence on the nominating process, an influence which would inevitably hurt the party in the general election.

In an effort to overcome the problem posed to the Democratic party by the single-issue activists of the Left, to make the national Democratic party once again competitive, a number of Democratic officeholders formed, in 1985, the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC). One of these officeholders was the Governor of Arkansas, Bill Clinton.

I had not known a great deal about Bill Clinton when I first met him a few years ago. What impressed me then and on other occasions was that he discussed social and economic issues thoughtfully and constructively, without using the buzz words, slogans, and rhetoric of the new liberalism. He also impressed me as extraordinarily knowledgeable. He had a great deal of factual data stored in his mind, available for use in support of his analyses of public issues and his proposed solutions. His looks resembled those of John F. Kennedy, but his demeanor, his breadth of interest, and his mastery of the facts reminded me of my own political idol, Hubert Humphrey. (Clinton may also have resembled Humphrey in his loquaciousness, but as some of us used to point out, Hubert had a lot to say that was worth hearing.)

TODAY, the principal concern of the electorate is with the state of our economy. The laissez-faire approach is clearly not working. Lowering the federal discount rate has not sufficed to put the unemployed back to work, to remove the fear of job loss from others, and to reverse the downward slide in our economy. Nor will 500,000 private-school vouchers improve the quality of our education system. And the decay of our urban centers and our infrastructure will not be arrested by the operation of the private sector.

There are no easy solutions to any of these problems, nor can all of them be solved by government. But a government which is not fully aware of the gravity of the problems, or whose leadership is not deeply interested in them, or which is ideologically committed not to intercede is not qualified to lead the country at this time.

It is against this background that the presidential candidates are to be assessed. Governor Clinton should not be judged on the basis of the pronouncements of the left-wing groups which in recent years have held a dominant position in the Democratic party, nor is it necessary to judge him only on his own pronouncements, let alone on whatever his views may have been when he studied at Oxford and Yale. He can be judged on a truly unique qualification: close to twelve years of experience as chief executive of a state with serious, endemic, long-term economic problems.

Clinton has not solved each and every one of these in his years as Governor of Arkansas, but he has shown that activist government in the tradition of Roosevelt and Truman, and a chief executive who has vision, commitment to problem-solving, and energy to carry through on this commitment, can effect significant improvements.

In this Arkansas microcosm of the problems he would face as President of the United States, he has successfully applied himself to the task of attracting industry and thus creating new jobs, to improving the quality of education through measures which include competency tests for teachers, and to expanding rural health-care programs. His administration has attracted attention for the quality of public service which it has rendered. His long tenure as Governor has demonstrated not only his dedication to public service, but also the satisfaction of the electorate with his accomplishments.

In contrast to his twelve years of highly qualifying experience on the domestic scene, Governor Clinton has not had any responsibility for the management of foreign affairs. Here is where we have to look to his association with the Democratic Leadership Council and to his own public statements for indications of his point of view.

Governor Clinton's colleagues on the Democratic Leadership Council, particularly those who serve in Congress, have been clearly identified with an activist role for the United States in support of the cause of freedom internationally and with the defense programs needed to make such a policy credible. As questions have been asked about Governor Clinton's position on Desert Storm, I can testify that on December 31, 1990, he told me that he was in favor of military action against Saddam Hussein. He reaffirmed that position with his support of a strong stand against Saddam in the recent crisis over UN access to the Iraqi Agriculture Ministry.

Though experience in foreign affairs is important, at this juncture in history vision in foreign affairs is an even more critical requirement. Truman's grand design has worked. Communism was ultimately contained. The Soviet threat is gone. A new approach to foreign policy is now needed to deal with the problems which our country faces as a member of the global family and as the one to which so many other countries look for guidance and inspiration.

We need to formulate a policy which responds to the worldwide yearnings for freedom and democracy; which confronts the danger of weapons of mass destruction falling into the hands of outlaw states or outlaw groups; which seeks to stop the gross abuse in some countries, including the world's most populous one, of internationally

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recognized human rights; which understands the threat posed by the new radicalism in the Islamic world; and which is prepared to address the serious prospect of worldwide ecological degradation.

Wilson, Roosevelt, and Truman understood that in the 20th century a policy recognizing the force of ideas which move people constitutes the best *Realpolitik*. Ronald Reagan, who reached political maturity as a strong supporter of President Roosevelt, adhered when he became President himself to a policy of Wilsonian internationalism, "for a universal dominion of right by . . . a concert of free peoples." It is the abandonment of that policy by the present administration in favor of a view of the world in terms of power blocs and geopolitical analyses which do not take ideology into account, combined with a lack of appreciation of the role which the United States can continue to play as the principal advocate of the cause of freedom, that underlines the need for new leadership.

SINCE Americans are geographically far removed from scenes of war and oppression, their initial reaction is understandably one of reluctance to get involved in such matters. But history has shown that Americans respond to activist presidential leadership in the field of foreign policy.

They are, however, more likely to follow the presidential lead, particularly when it requires an allocation of funds to assist foreign countries, if they are not beset with domestic economic problems. Our recent experience has shown that a President who is perceived as uninterested in economic affairs is handicapped in his pursuit of foreign-policy objectives. Governor Clinton can win popular support for an activist foreign policy because he is known to be concerned about domestic conditions and the fate of those who have been hard hit by the present economic decline. An activist policy can, of course, be carried out only if our country's economic strength is restored.

Governor Clinton's speeches and political associations do indeed reveal a commitment to Wilsonian internationalism. In two major addresses, one at Georgetown and one in New York, he has spoken out for a foreign policy aimed at advancing the international democratic cause. And he has gone on record on these issues at a time when the general public most assuredly is not clamoring for foreign-policy pronouncements by the candidates. From his statements and from his identification with the Democratic Leadership Council, we can expect him to frame a comprehensive new approach appropriate for the post-Leninist era.

That such an approach is not now in place is demonstrated by our experience with Iraq. Our policy of helping Iraq prior to August 1990 has been explained away as just an error, an aberration. But it was more than that. As can be seen from the documents recently submitted to Congress, that policy was the natural outgrowth of an approach which could in 1989 look at Iraq's oil resources, its strategic position, its hardworking, reasonably well-educated population, and yet disregard the fact that Saddam Hussein had established a totalitarian dictatorship reminiscent of Stalin's, was operating an all-pervasive secret-police force which used murder and torture to attain his ends, and in 1988, *after* the end of the war against Iran, had used chemical weapons to kill thousands of Kurdish civilians and cause tens of thousands more to flee the country.

It is in this context that concern about our policy toward Israel fits in as well. I have a high regard for James Baker, for his efforts as Secretary of State in the peace process, and for his approach on the settlements issue. What I am concerned about is where we go beyond that, how Israel fits into the present administration's geopolitical construct.

I can visualize our highest White House policymakers looking at a map of the world, analyzing all available data on population, resources, and markets, and then drawing conclusions similar to those drawn regarding Iraq before Saddam Hussein overreached. If we were able to ignore Saddam's murder and torture victims, if we were able to ignore the genocidal attacks on the Kurds, where will we stand on an undivided Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, on the maintenance of Israel's qualitative defense edge? For the United States to remain steadfast on such issues, it will have to set aside 19th-century *Realpolitik* and affirm our commitment, in Wilson's words, "to the rights and liberties of small nations." Will we?

Governor Clinton has said that he understands "the meaning of secure and recognized boundaries," that he believes that a "peace that does not provide for Israel's security will not itself be a secure and lasting peace," that "as we promote peace in the Middle East . . . , so should we also promote democracy in the Middle East." These are, I concede, mere words, but they seem to fit into a world view based on a commitment to the democratic cause rather than a geopolitical calculus.

THE return to the traditional Democratic outlook on foreign, defense, and domestic policy, as epitomized by the Truman administration, and as reasserted by the Democratic Leadership Council, did not come about without a fight. The groups which had reduced the national party to minority status ultimately coalesced in 1992 around the candidacy of Jerry Brown. The candidate who had taken on the task of carrying the banner for the Democratic-party policies which won the approval of America's vot-

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ers in presidential elections was Governor Clinton. He was willing to risk alienating those who for years had alienated a majority of the electorate from the Democratic national ticket. He has redeemed the Truman legacy. He has thereby earned the support of the traditional Democratic constituency. He has accomplished what some of us may have thought was no longer possible: he has brought the Democratic party back to policies which reflect the concerns of the American mainstream.

A man who has the talents of leadership which he has shown in the campaign so far, who has the talents to change the outlook of the national Democratic party, has the talents to lead the country.

Thomas Sowell: After the withdrawal of H. Ross Perot from the presidential election campaign scene, some of the more idealistic hopes and heightened fears of the unknown have both subsided, leaving voters with the all too familiar choice of the lesser of two evils. The great danger in this situation is that many disillusioned voters will become apathetic, at a time when this country stands at a political crossroads. Uninspiring as the presidential candidates themselves may be, the choice made this November can chart the course for this country's economy, cultural values, and legal system on into the 21st century, and make this a safer or more dangerous world for generations yet unborn.

The economy is at a crossroads because two radically different visions of what is wrong, and what is needed to correct it, are contending in the political arena, in the media, and among economists. The most familiar political refrain is that our economic troubles are a legacy of the Reagan administration, and especially of "tax cuts for the rich" which have supposedly produced the growing deficit and staggering national debt. According to this view, the Reagan prosperity was due to a binge of borrowing, from which we are now suffering the inevitable hangover.

If this vision is correct, then clearly we need to raise the tax rates, especially at the upper end of the income scale, reconsider the deregulation of the economy, and end the "neglect of the cities." But is it correct?

When the history of propaganda is written, one of the classic triumphs of the art must be the naming of deficits for Presidents—the "Reagan deficit," the "Bush deficit"—and more specifically the blaming of the growing national debt on "tax cuts for the rich." Facts to the contrary are not only readily available but blatantly obvious.

First of all, all spending and taxing bills originate in the House of Representatives, as prescribed by the Constitution of the United States. Irrespective of what any President may propose, the House of Representatives controls both spending and taxing, from which the deficits come. There are middle-aged Americans who have never known a time when the House of Representatives was not controlled by the Democrats.

One of the political talking points made by Congressmen who wish to escape responsibility for the deficits they have created is that neither President Reagan nor President Bush ever sent them a balanced budget to vote on. This argument represents the kind of game-playing which has so justly discredited Washington politicians. Can anyone seriously believe that a House of Representatives overwhelmingly controlled by the Democrats was putty in the hands of Ronald Reagan, much less George Bush?

The obvious reasons why these Presidents never sent up a balanced budget were that (1) there was not a snowball's chance in hell that it would be passed if they did, because such a budget would have to eliminate too many federal benefits that various groups were either receiving or expecting to receive; and (2) the only practical effect of sending a balanced budget to Congress would be to allow the administration's political opponents to point to the proposed spending cuts, in order to arouse the various interest groups against the President and to allow Congress to pose as the savior of such groups. Even so, whatever budgets Presidents Reagan and Bush proposed, Congress repeatedly appropriated more money than was requested.

Quite aside from the question as to why things were not done differently is the question of what actually produced the budget deficit during the Reagan years. Here the record is very clear.

Official government statistics show that there was a budget deficit of $74 billion in 1980, the last year of the Carter administration, when the federal government had $517 billion in receipts and spent $591 billion. Every year of the Reagan administration saw the federal government take in more money than was either received or spent during any year of the Carter administration. "Tax cuts for the rich" did not reduce government revenue, which in fact rose by hundreds of billions of dollars over what was taken in during any previous year in the history of the republic. The top 5 percent of income earners paid a higher proportion of these taxes than before.

Much verbal sleight-of-hand is used to confuse these issues. Tax rates were in fact reduced during the Reagan administration—and not just for "the rich"—but tax receipts hit unprecedented

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heights as income and employment rose. As the tax rates came down, more people invested their money in something more productive than tax shelters, benefiting themselves, the economy, and the treasury. By 1991, federal receipts were twice what they were in the Carter administration.

Why, then, was there a growing deficit? Because Congress increased spending by even more hundreds of billions of dollars. The fatal economic fallacy in all attempts to reduce the deficit through tax increases is that it is impossible to take in more money than Congress can spend. All that happens is that an ever-increasing share of the nation's resources flow into Washington, to be dispensed by politicians for political purposes.

As for "the rich," neither they nor their "fair share" of taxes has ever been consistently defined, no doubt because it is more politically convenient to leave them undefined. What the big spenders and big taxers want is what Samuel Gompers wanted: "More." Last year, the National Taxpayers Union rated Governor Bill Clinton's running mate, Senator Al Gore, among the worst of the big spenders in Congress.

What makes the election-year politics of "the rich" versus "the poor" particularly fraudulent is that these terms typically refer to statistics rather than to people. People have a continuous existence, while statistics have meaning only as of the given moment when they were compiled. For example, a variety of studies shows that most of those in "the bottom 20 percent" of the income distribution ("the poor") are no longer there a decade later. For one thing, they have a decade more experience, and that shows up in the paycheck. Yet politicians and the media mindlessly equate transient statistical categories with ongoing social classes. Genuinely rich and genuinely poor people who remain where they are over the years exist, but the two put together are only a small fraction of the American people, however much they may dominate political rhetoric.

We need to understand the facts of the Reagan-era economy, not only because they have been so widely misrepresented, but also because these facts provide important clues as to why things have been going downhill since then. Instead of continuing the Reagan-era policies of getting government off the backs of businesses that create jobs, Congress has found a new way to provide the illusion of free lunches, by mandating costs on businesses instead of raising taxes. But costs that are swept under the rug are just as crippling to the economy as costs that are plainly visible in the federal budget.

Governor Clinton's much-vaunted program of "change" consists largely of doing more of the same things that liberal Democrats have always done, under the same assumptions and theories, though with different labels and rhetoric. For example, Clinton wishes to mandate health care by calling it "a right, not a privilege." You can call it Rumpelstiltskin and it will still cost money, handicap American industry, and cost American jobs. So too will mandating that businesses give employees "time off from work when a baby is born or a parent is sick," as Clinton urged in his speech to the Democratic national convention. Giving out goodies at someone else's expense is still the name of the political game for Democrats.

The desirability of any of these benefits is not at issue. It is axiomatic that the number of desirable things always exceeds what is simultaneously possible. There will always be "unmet needs" to be provided by government, as long as people are unwilling to face up to the inevitable sacrifices these benefits entail. One of the remarkable signs of this refusal to face reality is the continuing effort to force automobile manufacturers to meet arbitrary mileage requirements, even as they are drowning in red ink, laying off workers by the tens of thousands, and closing manufacturing plants permanently.

To add to the bitter irony, the world's known petroleum reserves have doubled within the past quarter of a century, during a period of political hysteria over the supposedly desperate need to conserve gasoline. Senator Gore has been among the leading environmentalist hysterics in Congress, and has written a best-selling book on the familiar theme that the sky is falling, based on familiar misconceptions and arbitrary computer models, whose results do not square with actual climate data.

To continue Congress's pattern of handing out well-publicized benefits with hidden costs, and of responding to orchestrated hysteria by mandating crippling restrictions on industry, is to continue to strangle the goose that lays the golden egg. Yet Governor Clinton has clearly signaled that he intends to stay on that road. He is already covering himself by making the revival of the economy look like some Herculean task: "We didn't get into this mess overnight, and we won't get out of it overnight," he said to the Democrats assembled last July in New York.

What is amazing, however, is how quickly an economy can recover and revitalize itself—if the politicians will only let it. Ronald Reagan was in office less than two years before the longest economic expansion in American history began. Korea and Sri Lanka likewise took off economically in a very short time after their politicians backed off from the economy. Even in Lenin's Soviet Union, a relaxation of the controls that were suffocating the economy after the Bolshevik Revolution quickly brought a sharp upturn under the New Economic Policy. Letting an economy improve is not a Herculean task. More to the point, this supposed difficulty will not be a valid excuse when more political tinkering brings on

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the inevitable worsening of economic conditions.

One of the many false notes of this political campaign is that what we need is to "end the gridlock" in Washington. This assumes that galvanizing politicians is the way to benefit the economy and the society. Neither logic nor evidence supports that conclusion. The last time we had both houses of Congress and the White House of the same party, and working in tandem, we had double-digit unemployment, double-digit inflation, and interest rates soaring over 20 percent. Gridlock would have been far preferable to this debacle in the Carter administration. Many of the problems of the Bush administration have resulted from the President's willingness to go along with Congress, not from gridlock.

When it comes to the economy, President Bush has not been crusading for the free market like Ronald Reagan before him, but neither has he been a fountain of new ideas for loading ever more hidden costs on it. He is the lesser of two evils here, as elsewhere—but by a considerable margin. If we ever accept the Clinton prescription of protracted government efforts to get the economy moving again, we will have signed on for more years of stagnation, unemployment, and ultimately inflation as well.

The idea that urban riots are a result of the "neglect of the cities" may fit the liberal mindset but it does not fit the facts of history. Riots have become far more common and far more violent with the burgeoning of government spending since 1960 for welfare-state programs in general, and urban programs in particular. However, the eight Reagan years were not particularly marked by riots.

If facts carried as much weight as ideology, it might be possible to argue the opposite thesis, that government spending and government programs foster the conditions that produce riots. Nor is this idea wholly fanciful. A whole class of "poverty pimps," hustling messiahs, and "community leaders" has been created and sustained by government programs. Such people have every incentive to promote alienation, racial breast-beating, and resentments of society in general and of more successful minorities in their midst in particular, whether these other groups be Korean and Vietnamese small businessmen today or Jews in past decades.

VIRTUALLY everyone recognizes that foreign policy is George Bush's strong suit. With the ending of the cold war, however, many seem to think that foreign policy no longer matters very much. That view is tragically mistaken.

The fragile new democracy in Russia comes with no money-back guarantee that it will last, and if this nuclear superpower returns even halfway to its old ways, the costs to ourselves and the dangers to our children and grandchildren will be incalculable. World peace does not just happen. It takes work, skill, and experience. Neither Governor Clinton nor Senator Gore has the background for that. Worse, the party they represent is the party of protectionism and of promoting resentments of any foreign commitments that might interfere with domestic handouts.

The cold war was not a unique historical episode. All throughout history nations have had frictions, collisions, and war. To believe that such things are not going to continue, just because the Soviets are not our enemy at the moment, is wishful thinking.

The other great area of foreign-policy concern, the Middle East, by no means represents an unqualified success for the Bush administration. Although Operation Desert Storm boosted the President's popularity to unprecedented heights, even that triumph has faded with time. As regards Israel, James Baker continued the tradition that American Secretaries of State think themselves better qualified than Israel to determine what is in Israel's interest and in the interest of Middle East peace. However, there is no clear reason to think that a Clinton administration would do any better.

On the whole, foreign policy is a plus for the Bush administration. How the emerging world of East European nations, and of the successor states to Yugoslavia, sort themselves out over the next several years can have much wider repercussions. World War I, after all, started in Sarajevo. If some deft statesmanship now can prevent American boys from having to go "over there" again, that is surely preferable to burying our heads in the sand of isolationism until problems get so completely out of hand that we are forced to act.

ALTHOUGH the economy is an immediately pressing concern and foreign policy always has a potential for peril, the most fundamental long-run problems facing this country revolve around the internal degeneration of our own society, behind which lies the degeneration of our own values and the degeneration of American education, the family, and law and order.

With the test scores of American schoolchildren falling to new lows compared to those of past generations, as well as trailing the standards of other contemporary industrial nations, something clearly has to be done. To Governor Clinton, and to the National Education Association that endorses his candidacy, the answer is more money. President Bush, however, has advocated parental choice—a choice extending beyond the public schools to include private schools for those who want them.

A choice limited to the public schools, as Clinton proposes, is a choice controlled by the education establishment, which has repeatedly shown its power and craftiness in evading and

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thwarting educational reforms. Transferring a child from one public school to another can easily be made enough of a bureaucratic nightmare to limit the number of transfers to a level that will not inconvenience the schools, imperil their funding, or jeopardize the job security of any teachers or administrators.

Much more is involved in educational reform than education, though that is fundamental to many other social problems. To an extent that is seldom suspected by the public, American public schools have deemphasized academic training in favor of classroom brainwashing in countercultural attitudes toward everything from sex to death. More important, they have systematically undermined traditional morality, family values, and even the parent-child relationship. Our schools have not failed. They have succeeded in substituting their own agenda for the agenda preferred by parents, voters, and taxpayers.

It is within this context that parental choice becomes crucial for both parents and the education establishment. In short, education has become a battlefield in a cultural war that is raging from the art galleries to the Supreme Court. It is an undeclared but ugly, relentless, and ruthless war for the soul of this country.

There are not simply people with differing ideas about cultural values, seeking to express those differences in the marketplace of ideas. Rather, there are people who seek to make their ideas preemptive, to make allegiance to "multiculturalism" a condition of employment in the teacher-hiring process, to brainwash other people's children behind their parents' backs and under misleading labels, to shout down speakers who oppose their viewpoint. They do not want to discuss. They want to win.

Many of the critics of the kinds of values being promoted by the self-anointed zealots get drawn into the merits or demerits of sex education, multiculturalism, nonjudgmental "values-clarification" programs, and the like, when the real issue is not what to decide but *who is to decide.* Whose children are these? Whose tax money is it? What does democracy mean if people cannot shape the society they live in, but must defer to the fashions of the anointed, as expressed by nonelected judges under the pretense of interpreting the Constitution?

A small but indicative skirmish in the cultural wars occurred recently in New York state, when the Court of Appeals threw out as discriminatory a law banning women, but not men, from appearing topless on public beaches. One of these topless women opined on nationwide television that this was a more "healthy" attitude, and was especially good for the children. But obviously there would not have been a law or a controversy in the first place if other people did not believe the direct opposite. Again, the real question is, *who is to decide*?

This was only one of innumerable issues on which judicial preemption has been the method of decision-making, not only in cultural matters but throughout the economy and society. Too much of the discussion of these legal trends is in terms of the specific merits of the particular decisions as public policy, and whether the policy chosen was "liberal" or "conservative," when the momentous question is whether we are witnessing the judicial repeal of the American Revolution.

On this crucial issue of the right of ordinary Americans to decide where their taxes are spent, what community standards of decency shall prevail, with what values their own children shall be raised, whether criminals are to be punished or turned into social experimental projects, whether people shall be treated equally as individuals or preferentially as groups—on all such issues of cultural values and democratic government, the presidential candidates of the Democratic party, over the past twenty years, have consistently come down on the side of the self-anointed elites and their usurpation of power from the ordinary citizen.

THE fundamental problem of the Clinton-Gore ticket is the same as the fundamental problem of all the Democratic presidential tickets of the past twenty years: their values and priorities are not the values and priorities of the American people. Given that, the candidates have no choice but to run a campaign of camouflage, with lots of American flags flying and lots of use of the words "family" and "values," much like the wartime strategy of counterfeiting the currency of the enemy in order to devalue it.

The successes or failures of Democratic presidential aspirants, both in the primaries and in the general elections, have generally reflected their success or failure at maintaining the camouflage.

As long as 1988 Democratic presidential candidate Michael Dukakis held onto his campaign image as a nonideological, businesslike technocrat, interested in "making things work," he soared far above George Bush in the polls. Only after he was exposed as the dyed-in-the-wool liberal ideologue that he had always been throughout his career did he sink in the polls and almost disappear on election night. Democratic presidential candidates with liberal reputations too well known and too long-lasting to deny—George McGovern and Walter Mondale—did not even achieve a transient lead in the public-opinion polls before being buried under an avalanche at election time.

The one success story among Democratic candidates of the past two decades—Jimmy Carter—only underscores this pattern. Carter took a position to the Right of his Democratic rivals during the 1976 primary season and was able to depict himself as a moderate in the general election.

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Only after four years in office tore away the camouflage did he go down to the same inglorious defeat as the others.

This year, the first Democratic candidates to vanish in the primaries were the unabashed liberals Tom Harkin and Bob Kerrey. Clinton has played the old Jimmy Carter role. Whether he will be able to maintain his camouflage until November depends not only on him but also on how well the Republicans successfully expose him and his vice-presidential running mate. The media, sharing many of the same values that the Democratic candidates try to camouflage, call it "negative advertising" when the fraud is exposed.

Clinton clearly understands the importance of camouflage. His invocations of "family" and "values," and his publicly leading in the Pledge of Allegiance, show that he has done his homework on the Dukakis debacle. His wife Hillary, whose sarcastic comments about housewives making cookies almost let the cat out of the bag, has been kept almost hermetically sealed from the press in the campaign. Her directorship of the so-called Children's Defense Fund, which is seeking to get the courts to create a new "right" for children to sue their parents, is being quietly forgotten.

This "right" to sue parents, incidentally, is not about child abuse, for which there are already laws on the books. Children should be able to sue for separation, according to so-called "children's advocates," who will of course collect fees from the taxpayers if they succeed in getting children's "rights" established, in addition to gaining a victory for the brave new world they envision. One spokesman for the Child Rights Alliance, another advocacy group, argues that children should have the right to be heard in court as soon as they can talk: "We have experience with children as young as three years old saying, 'I don't want to live here anymore.'"

The role of the family is crucial, and the systematic undermining of its effectiveness and legitimacy in recent decades has produced social disasters that can only get worse if this trend is not reversed. For those politicians who have been part of this process, including Governor Clinton, the crucial political issue is how to cover their vulnerability and turn the tables on their critics. This they have largely succeeded in doing thus far, partly due to the ineptness of their opponents, perhaps epitomized by the choice of the *Murphy Brown* television program as the appropriate battlefield.

Social-service agencies, public schools, and judicial activists have all amputated functions of the family and transferred them elsewhere. The choice of the age at which children are to be introduced to sexual matters, for example, and the manner of introducing them and with what moral values, was long ago taken out of the hands of parents. As with so many other assumptions of superior wisdom in an avant-garde elite, the actual results have been disastrous, whether measured in soaring teenage pregnancy rates—after years of *decline* before "sex education" was widely introduced into American schools—or in the growing incidence of venereal diseases, including AIDS. Yet among Clinton's claims to social concern was his pushing so-called "sex education" into the Arkansas schools. Like his wife, Bill Clinton has clearly chosen his side in the cultural wars.

The public image of being pro-family may be created by simply proclaiming "family values" at a political convention, by baring family secrets on nationwide television, and by pointing to the tax dollars spent subsidizing families or family-surrogate agencies. But all of that misconceives the role of a family.

Families do not exist to be recipients of government largesse or targets of social experiments. Despite desperate analogies between the family and the welfare state, families and family values are about *reciprocal* obligations—in sharp contrast to political one-way commitments of tax money or blind underwriting of risky behavior, whether by savings-and-loan executives, welfare mothers, or AIDS-prone groups like homosexuals or drug users. Contrary to current elite fashions, families are "judgmental" about behavior, which is emphatically not a matter of "doing your own thing," because other members of the family suffer emotionally, financially, and through public stigma when one of them goes wrong.

Families are about autonomy and privacy, not about government programs or "telling all" on TV. Families are not cells of a governmental structure or guinea pigs feeding at the public trough. Today, and for the foreseeable future, families are besieged. They face the intrusions of social workers, the brainwashing of their children in the public schools, and now the threat of lawyers grabbing a piece of the action by representing children in lawsuits against parents, if the so-called Children's Defense Fund has its way. The public scarcely suspects how pervasively parents and family values are undermined in the public schools. You would have to see the books, the movies, and the programs to believe them. (My research assistant, a mother, said that she had trouble sleeping at night after viewing for me more than twenty movies routinely shown to children in public schools.)

Family values are the antithesis of the values of the welfare state, though Clinton and other partisans of the welfare state measure their "commitment" to the family the way they measure so many other commitments, by how many billions of tax dollars they are willing to pour down the bottomless pit of government programs.

ONE of the growing factors in family issues, as in a wide spectrum of other social issues, is the courts—and especially the federal appellate courts, whose judges are ap-

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pointed by the President of the United States. Such appointments have become an enormous responsibility, with implications for the whole future of this society, precisely because so many judges, including Justices of the Supreme Court, have expanded their own roles into social policy-making. Too often, such policies have been assessed by whether they were "liberal" or "conservative," when they should have been assessed by whether they were any of the judges' business in the first place.

Governor Clinton has again clearly chosen his side. He has publicly announced that he will use a political "litmus test"—the abortion issue—to determine who gets nominated to the Supreme Court. Does anyone doubt that other political tests will follow? Or that this will solidify the role of the courts as political policy-makers? It is also worth noting that many in the media and elsewhere who criticized President Bush for allegedly using abortion as a litmus test in choosing Supreme Court nominees are now strangely quiet when Governor Clinton clearly and blatantly advocates such a litmus test. The media are equally quiet about the fact that the Bush-appointed Justices actually split on the recent abortion decision in *Planned Parenthood* v. *Casey*, contrary to the cynical allegations.

Governor Clinton's plans for the federal judiciary were perhaps even more clearly revealed when he publicly indicated that he wants to appoint New York Governor Mario Cuomo to the Supreme Court. Can anyone doubt that Justice Cuomo would be another vote for going easy on criminals?

With the United States Supreme Court almost equally divided between those who want to make policy and those who want to enforce the Constitution as written, the whole future of the rule of law in this country is at stake. The media and the Senate Judiciary Committee seem wholly preoccupied with what kind of policies the Justices will make (with where nominees "stand" on the "issues," as they put it), when in fact we are at risk of losing what people have fought, bled, and died for, for centuries—the ideal of "a government of laws and not of men." For those who support judicial activism, the only question is whether the arbitrary edicts from the bench are "liberal" or "conservative" arbitrary edicts.

The election campaign thus far has clearly demonstrated that Governor Clinton is savvy politically. He knows that the blatant and breast-beating left-wing of the Democratic party—including, but not limited to, Jesse Jackson—is strictly a liability with the voters. So, too, are the congressional Democratic leaders, whose legislation and spending have contributed so much to the country's economic and other problems, whose check-bouncing was an embarrassment he did not need, and whom he kept far in the background at the Democratic convention.

On the fundamental assumptions behind the failed policies, however, Governor Clinton's record and proposals put him squarely in the liberal camp, however much his rhetoric tries to create a different image. He is for more spending, more taxes, and more power to a self-anointed elite preempting the rights of ordinary citizens to make their own decisions individually or to shape the destiny of their society through the democratic process.

THIS election is momentous, not because the two men are giants—God knows they are not—but because the country stands at a crossroads in its educational system, in its economy, in the role of the family, in the role of the judiciary in a self-governing democracy, and in the kind of world our children will inherit on the international scene. On all these issues, President Bush and Governor Clinton point to different futures for this country.

For all his faults, the President stands closer to the fundamental values of the American people, whether in the schools or the courts, and is on the side of those who want both institutions to limit their intrusions into things that are none of their business. He has resisted the quota bills that repeatedly appear in Congress under the label "civil rights," though he has not resisted enough, and ultimately succumbed on this front in 1991. As in other areas, such as taxes, Bush's shortcomings are in failing to stand up to the Democrats, but it is the Democrats who are pushing in a dangerous direction.

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Why I Thought Perot Would Win

Norman Podhoretz

WATCHING him on television, I never much liked Ross Perot. He always impressed me as one of those arrogant businessmen I have run into from time to time who have a philistine scorn for the skills required in fields other than their own and no respect for the constraints under which people in different enterprises are forced to work if they are to get anything done. Nor was I charmed by his manner, having as a result of overexposure lost the delight I once took in the Southern type known in his native habitat as a "good ol' boy."

And yet I became convinced very early on that Perot would win, and I went around saying so long before he started being taken seriously; I even made a few bets. In this way I found myself acquiring a stake in his campaign. I followed his progress very carefully, and even though I had no intention of voting for him, I greeted each new poll measuring his ascent with quiet satisfaction.

The reason I thought Perot would win was that, whether inadvertently (as I was inclined to believe) or by shrewd design, he had hit upon what struck me as exactly the right note for appealing to the electorate of 1992.

This electorate was by all accounts disgusted with the entire political process—a process that embraced not only the two major parties and the governmental system they controlled but also the mainstream media. Above all, however, the electorate was disgusted with politicians. The general feeling in 1992 might not have been as extreme as the one expressed many years ago by the poet E.E. Cummings, who once wrote: "A politician is an arse upon / which everyone has sat except a man." But it was not too far short.

Perhaps the most telling symptom of this phenomenon was the amazing public uproar over the check-kiting scandal in the House of Representatives. After all, no laws had been broken and no public funds stolen or misappropriated by the Congressmen whose bad checks had been covered by one another's deposits in the House bank. Nevertheless, the news had set off an explosion of outrage that had registered even higher on the political Richter scale than the reaction some years back to the pay raise Congress had tried to vote itself.

Much as it appalled me to find myself drawing such a comparison, I simply could not help being reminded of the resentment felt by ordinary citizens against the party officials (the *nomenklatura*) in the old Communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The *nomenklatura*, they used to complain, was supposed to be working for the good of the people, but it cared only for its own special privileges (such as being able to shop in hard-currency stores where scarce goods were always available which ordinary people either could never get or had to wait in endless lines to buy). Just so, the check-kiting scandal came to stand in for the special privileges enjoyed by members of Congress, including the ability to get away with things that would land anyone else in trouble; and it led to bitter reflections on their failure to *do* anything in return about the terrible problems they were presumably there to solve.

But of course Congressmen were not the only politicians being scorched by the heat of public contempt. According to all the polls, the negative ratings of the two main presidential candidates, the President himself and his likely Democratic challenger, Governor Bill Clinton of Arkansas, were at record highs and in those days showed no sign of improving.

George Bush's spectacular fall from popularity in the short time since the end of the Gulf War was due to many things: the fact that our victory in that war had turned out to be inconclusive; the fact that the economy was not emerging from the recession quickly or vigorously enough; the fact that he had violated his pledge not to raise taxes. It all added up to a kind of *coitus interruptus*, with nothing completed, nothing consummated. No wonder, then, that the whole country was in a state of anxiety.

As for Clinton, he was plagued by the "character" question: his extramarital activity; his avoidance of service in Vietnam; his reputation for deviousness as encapsulated in the sobriquet "slick Willie." This tag had been affixed to him in Arkansas, but it was reinforced by his performance in the primaries—first moving to the Right in trying to present himself as a moderate, and

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then, when Paul Tsongas preempted that position, tacking sharply to the Left. Besides, he was glib and he talked too much, with twenty answers to every question. As Charles Kuralt of CBS put it, "If you ask him what he thinks, he tells you everything he thinks."

It was this context that explained how and why a relative unknown like H. Ross Perot had been able to break through into political viability. As everyone recognized, he was a protest candidate—None of the Above. But just as clearly his support was not merely negative. How could it have been, when one comment from him ("If voters in all 50 states put me on the ballot—not 48 or 49 states, but all 50—I will agree to run") on *Larry King Live*, a not very widely watched cable-TV talk show, and an army of volunteers had immediately materialized all over the country to do just that?

Nothing quite like this had ever happened before, and as against most of the friends and acquaintances I discussed it with, and most of the commentators who wrote about it, I thought that past experience would be of no help in forecasting its course. They all said that Perot, like Henry Wallace and George Wallace and John Anderson before him, would fade; I said that both the circumstances and the candidate were radically different this year and that Perot would go from strength to strength. Barring some unforeseen scandalous revelation about his past, he could, and probably would, wind up with about 40 percent of the popular vote and a majority of the electoral college.

On one point especially we disagreed. They all said that Perot would have to come up with specific proposals on all the issues; when he did, the emptiness and incoherence of his ideas would become apparent and would gradually do him in. To my mind, however, Perot was dead right in his frequently stated belief that most voters had no interest in the policy papers and the detailed programs that were the food and drink of the Sunday-morning talk shows on network television and the editorialists and columnists in papers like the New York *Times* and the Washington *Post*.

Why indeed, I argued, should the voters care about such things? Could they (could we?) really tell whether Bill Clinton's 22-point health-care plan (or was it 42 points?) was better or worse than George Bush's minus-4-point plan? And even if they could, what reason did they have for expecting that the plan they favored would be enacted either by President "Read My Lips" or by "Slick Willie"?

This did not mean, I would hasten to add, that the voters were indifferent to the ideas of the candidates soliciting their support. But it was the *general* ideas that mattered and not the details so beloved of "policy wonks" and media pundits. And here, of course, the *locus classicus* was Ronald Reagan's campaign for the presidency in 1980.

In my judgment, both at the time and in retrospect, Reagan's victory in 1980 had to be understood in terms of the debate over whether the United States was in a condition of inevitable decline. President Jimmy Carter, without quite saying so explicitly, suggested that it was, and that the "mature" response was to accept and adjust to a historical process about which nothing could be done. Reagan totally rejected this position. There was, he insisted, nothing inevitable about our troubles; they stemmed not from history but from bad policies based on misleading ideas and mistaken values; and we could again become "number one" by returning to the right ideas and the solid values that had made us great in the past.

In this sense—if not in any other—Perot's appeal bore a fascinating resemblance to Reagan's. At a moment when the anxiety over national decline was even greater than it had been in 1980, neither of the two main candidates seemed likely in the eyes of most voters to lead the country back to its former greatness. True, neither one of them aped Jimmy Carter in seeing our decline as inevitable and virtually welcoming it. However, on the one side, Bush notoriously had no idea of what to do about it, and, on the other, Clinton had too many, which amounted to the same thing: it was the black hole against the motor mouth. Perot, by dramatic contrast, exuded a simple Reagan-like confidence in the possibility of renewal and recovery.

To be sure, even within this resemblance between Perot and Reagan, there was a sharp difference. If Reagan's answer to the fear of decline had essentially been spiritual, involving a return to traditional moral, political, and social values, Perot's was basically technocratic, involving an all-out effort to fix a system that had broken down. Indeed, his most striking and most effective image was the one about putting the car up on the rack, working on the engine all night, and getting that car back on the road first thing in the morning.

It was when I first heard him use this image that I really began taking the chances of a Perot victory seriously. For it seemed to me that in comparing the country to a car which had broken down and in promising to fix it without delay, he was showing great political brilliance. To begin with, he was plugging into a deep strain in the American character—the strain that believes there are no insoluble problems, that all problems can be solved by effort and ingenuity. Secondly, to a people whose worries over national economic decline were perhaps best symbolized by the fact that the Japanese were making better cars than we were—not to mention how hard it

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had become to get the defective American cars repaired—his message was that the situation could and would be reversed.*

Moreover, Perot's technocratic appeal seemed perfectly attuned to a climate in which politicians were widely despised. Since the politicians had already shown that they were unable, and even unwilling, to make the system go, why not try a nonpolitician, a businessman with a spectacular record of success in the computer industry, the very industry that looked to and spoke of the future? Under those circumstances, Perot's response to the question of whether he was qualified to be President—"compared to whom?"—was devastating.

As I saw it, then, Perot in all these ways had hit upon the winning appeal for 1992. But what was equally important, he had the means to make it stick and see it through. And here we come to the $100 million of his own money that he declared himself willing to spend on "a world-class campaign."

The point about this money was not only that it gave him viability as an independent candidate, but that it also liberated him from dependence on the mainstream media. Already, by choosing to publicize his candidacy mainly on cable television and on offbeat talk shows, he had bypassed the self-appointed and self-important tribunes of the people who ran the Sunday-morning interview programs. And even when he subjected himself to questioning by those tribunes, he treated them as no better than politicians, part of the very system he was out to fix.

Far from hurting him, Perot's testy exchanges with the television inquisitors only increased his popularity with all the millions out there who saw them in the same light as he did and whose resentment of them exceeded, if anything, their contempt for the politicians. (I confess to enough sympathy with this attitude toward the major media to have felt that the best single feature of Perot's campaign was the degree to which he was shaking the complacency of the inquisitors. They simply could not figure out how to handle this character who refused to accept their ground rules and who came at them simultaneously from the Left and the Right. It was a pleasure to watch.)

In the end, to everyone's surprise, Perot was unwilling to spend the fabled hundred million that would have bought him enough time on television to appeal over the heads of the tribunes and directly to the voters. In consequence, he had no effective means to answer back when, as was bound to happen, the system began chopping him up.

At first an effort was made to cast various kinds of doubt on him as a businessman and also to show that he was not really the outsider he claimed to be. None of these complicated reports made any impression. But then came a second wave of stories—about his habit of spying and digging up dirt on anyone who had the temerity to cross him, and this time blood was drawn, especially among his more liberal supporters. (Between one set of polls and the next, he lost eight points, all of them to Clinton.)

Possibly Perot would have failed to undo the damage caused by this second wave of stories even if he had made good on his pledge to spend all that money. Possibly the zigging and zagging he had already begun to engage in on issues like homosexuality—taking a position and then retreating from it under pressure—would have done him in, money or no money. Possibly it was not only because of the stories about spying that his support had begun to decline so steeply in the two weeks or so before he withdrew, but also because he was already acting like any other politician.

But if, in this respect, Perot was revealing himself to be just another politician, his sudden withdrawal from the race showed just the opposite. A politician is a person whose ruling passion is to win—not to be right, not to serve some higher cause or ideal, but to win. No true politician could say, "I'd rather be right than President"—and if he did say it, it would be out of tactical considerations and he would know in his heart that he was lying.

In order to win, the true politician will go to almost unimaginable lengths. (A good recent example was the appalling exploitation of his own little boy's near-fatal accident by Al Gore in his speech accepting the Democratic nomination for Vice President.†) The true politician will also tell every group what it wants to hear, and when he fails to do this, it will either be because he has miscalculated or because he thinks there are more votes to gain by it than to lose. (A case in point here was Clinton's attack, thoroughly justified though it was, on the black rap singer Sister

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* When a group of lawyers and businessmen to whom I was lecturing one morning expressed incredulity over my prediction that Perot would win, and when I countered with, "But this guy says that he'll fix your car," they all laughingly declared that in that case they would vote for him.

† To make matters worse, after describing in graphic detail how his son had almost died as a result of being hit by a car, Gore declared that the great lesson he had learned from the experience was that "some things matter a lot more than winning"! He later also indignantly denied the suggestion that he had been exploitative and manipulative, counterattacking with the charge that anyone who could question his motives must be guilty of "a kind of special quality of cynicism that stands as a barrier to the way we communicate with each other." Happily for him, such cynicism was rarely on display in the published comment about his speech, which drew praise from all sides. Democrats saw in it a new Al Gore, less wooden, more touchingly human, and even Peggy Noonan, the famous Republican speechwriter, saluted it as the best speech of the convention. Thus do standards of taste and decency in our public discourse continue on their sickening descent.

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Souljah's advocacy of anti-white violence when he spoke before Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition.)

In our system, this person whose ruling passion is to win must submit to a punishing process which is diabolically designed to exact a price that no one but a true politician would be willing to pay. It is a process that is costly enough even at the lowest electoral levels, but it becomes truly prohibitive in a presidential campaign.

The question is, mused a memorable editorial in the *Wall Street Journal* when the going got rough for the Democratic Vice-Presidential candidate in 1984, "can Gerry Ferraro hit major-league pitching?" Begging for money, alternately bragging and abasing oneself, repressing anger with a smile (and not too tight a smile, at that), tolerating impertinence, biting one's tongue, shaving the truth without being caught in a lie, giving up any semblance of privacy: the ability to do all this—while traveling nonstop, eating bad food, and getting no sleep—is what is required to hit major-league pitching in the political game.

And there is more: there is the fortitude to carry on when the prospects look bad, to get up every morning and drag oneself through the grueling day even if at that moment winning seems an impossible dream. This fortitude is the great virtue that compensates for the characteristic vices of the true politician, and while Perot demonstrated that he was no stranger to some of those vices, his withdrawal from the race proved that (unlike both Clinton and Bush) he entirely lacked the balancing virtue.

PEROT'S own explanation of his decision to get out was that the "revitalization" of the Democratic party had convinced him that the best he could now hope to do was throw the race into the House of Representatives, and that this would be bad for the country. Others—among them his campaign manager, Edward J. Rollins—thought that he had been shaken by the attacks on his character. Still others speculated that he feared the effect of new scandals up ahead. And still others said (according to a report in the New York *Times*) that

> he lost heart when he began to realize what his advisers told him might be necessary to address the country's economic difficulties, especially the federal budget deficit, something he once said he could solve "without breaking a sweat."

But whatever the real reason, the fact remained that this man, who had a habit of quoting a stirring admonition by Winston Churchill ("Never give in. Never give in. Never, never, never, never"), finally acted on the basis of a very different admonition by Harry Truman ("If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen").

Obviously, if I had had any inkling of the kind of man Perot was, I would never have predicted that he could beat George Bush and Bill Clinton (although if he *had* possessed the fortitude to slog through the bumpy patch he had hit, he might still have wound up the winner). Nor in my chastened condition am I prepared to predict which of those two will be our next President.

To me, and to millions of other Americans, both Bush and Clinton are still unsatisfactory, and neither one inspires much confidence. But thanks to the negative model of Perot, I for one am now prepared to say with genuine approval and appreciation that at least they are both true politicians. For so far as I am concerned, Ross Perot has inadvertently accomplished what he may least have intended: he has given politicians a good name.

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Looking Back at Lot's Wife

Rebecca Goldstein

I

IT WAS one of the stories from Genesis that most frightened me as a child: the story of Lot's wife.

She was told not to look, and she looked; and her punishment came swift and horrible. Frozen in the moment of her transgression, exposed to the eyes of all in her act of rebellion, she was transformed into a spectacle of salt, reduced to an element vaguely ridiculous, as if to turn back any motion of pity in us. And for what? She was told not to look, and she looked.

"Why did she look?" I asked the second-grade Hebrew-school teacher, who was telling the story.

"It doesn't matter *why* she looked," my teacher answered. "God said not to look, and she looked. She thought she could get away with it, but of course she couldn't. Nobody can get away with anything. God sees all."

That God sees all was a lesson my teacher was anxious to impress upon us at any opportunity, and it was a lesson that I, as a child, accepted without question. It was clear that God's seeing all was a consequence of God's being God. My teacher's response therefore seemed to me irreproachable so far as its theology went. It was on the level of human psychology that I felt it falling short.

Specifically, I didn't believe that Lot's wife had thought that she could get away with it. *I* wouldn't have thought so, and I was a mere child, living in pallid, nonbiblical days. In vivid contrast was the picture of Lot's wife: fleeing the accursed city, the shrieks of the damned in her ears, and in her nostrils the sickening stink as Heaven's fire and brimstone came raining down behind her. (What *was* brimstone?)

God had warned that He would come, and He had come: in the version, embellished by rabbinical tradition, told to us by my teacher, His very Presence had descended, along with a host of 12,000 Angels of Destruction. It wasn't the moment in which to think that one could get away with very much of anything.

I wasn't about to press the issue any further with my teacher, but I was fairly certain that whatever it was that had made Lot's wife look back in her flight was in the nature of an overwhelming compulsion (a concept with which children tend to be well acquainted): the sort of irresistible urge that makes the whole question of whether or not one is going to get away with it pretty much beside the point.

What therefore seemed to me very much *to* the point was the question I had put to my teacher: what forced Lot's wife to look back, and—even more to the point—would I have felt driven to do exactly the same?

You begin to see why the story frightened me. Up to now in Genesis, the villains had been recognizably villainous—a brother who killed a brother, egomaniacs who brazenly questioned God's authority and erected claims to their own imagined supremacy.

But looking where one is told not to look?

Had Lot's wife, I wondered, looked back simply because she had been told not to do so, as I unfailingly sneaked a peek while standing between my mother and sisters in our pew in the synagogue during the recitation of the Priestly Blessing that was said on the holidays?

I had been warned by my mother, and again by my older sister, to avert my eyes from the *bimah* where the priests were chanting their spooky melody, lest I be blinded by the Presence descending upon their upraised hands. Beneath my lowered lids I could see my two sisters turned dutifully away, facing the back of the synagogue, as all the congregation was turned away, many of the men covering their heads with their prayer shawls, as the priests themselves were doing.

Did Lot's wife and I share the same perversity of nature that compelled us to take stupid risks for no very good reason at all, for no reason that really went beyond the risk itself? And was it for this that her punishment had come swift and horrible?

Or was it rather for the whisper of a doubt, soft but irrepressible, that is perhaps always spoken in such actions as looking where one is told not to look? Were there moments in history during

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which God simply would not tolerate the *existence* of the skeptic?

The symbolic significance of the gesture of looking back wasn't lost on me. A child's knowledge of nostalgia is one of the mysteries of childhood. Perhaps it wasn't so much that there were moments forbidding doubt as that there were places that merited no sense of attachment. Was it the regret and longing she had directed back to her home in Sodom that had drawn God's wrath down on her?

And yet another sort, a meaner sort, of motive behind her action suggested itself, one that would remove her to a safer distance from myself: a kind of cold enchantment with the drama of death.

The summer we had spent at the seashore I had seen for myself how the crowd had gathered around the boy who had been pulled unconscious from the ocean, and how the voice and face of this crowd had quickened with a strange excitement, as if it were almost glad for the event.

Did Lot's wife have such a strong taste for the theater provided by others' tragedy that she could not keep herself from stealing a glimpse of the flaming spectacle? And was it for this that she herself had been turned, most appropriately, into the stuff of tragic spectacle?

Voyeurism or skepticism, nostalgia or bravado: who was Lot's wife, and what had moved her to look back and risk all?

II

WHEN I came home from school that evening I immediately went to my father with my questions. I asked him whether we knew the name of Lot's wife, and I asked him why she had looked back.

My father went to his bookshelf and took down one of his huge tomes, leafed through it for a while, returned it to the shelf, took down another book, and read. After a while he said to me:

"According to this midrash her name was Irit (some say Idit). She and Lot had four daughters. There were the two daughters who fled together with their parents out of Sodom, but there were also two other daughters, who were already married to Sodomite men. When Lot warned these two sons-in-law that Sodom was about to be destroyed, they laughed and said, 'There is music and festivity in the city, and you speak about destruction!'

"According to this midrash, Irit had pity on her two older daughters who were left behind with their husbands. She turned around to see if they were following her and she saw the Presence and was turned to salt."

My father and I stared at each other for a few moments.

"This is only one midrash," my father finally said. "I'll see if I can find some other interpretations that will make things clearer to us."

My father was telling me that he, too, was confused by the story of Lot's wife. And from his confusion I knew many things. I knew, first of all, that, in looking back at Irit, he, too, looked back with pity. But far more importantly, I knew from his confusion that my father, just like Irit, would also have looked back to see if all his daughters were following.

III

THEREFORE, I concluded, my father was not a righteous man, at least not in the biblical sense of the word. And for this I was extremely grateful. For what did righteous fathers do? They obeyed the word of God unconditionally, down to the last letter.

The righteous father Abraham arose early in the morning, while it was still dark, to prepare firewood for the sacrifice. He chopped the wood and saddled the donkey himself, not allowing any of his servants to perform these tasks that would ordinarily have been theirs. Evidently, out of his great love for God's word, he wished to perform for himself every part of God's request of him. And what request had that been? The sacrifice of Isaac, the son Abraham loved the best, the son who had been miraculously born when Abraham was one hundred years old and Sarah, his wife, ninety.

And when that son, on the way to the land of Moriah, turned to the father and said: "My father. Here are both fire and wood, but where is the lamb for the sacrifice?" the righteous father answered: "God Himself will choose the lamb for the sacrifice, my son"—adding (again in the version embellished by rabbinical tradition), "and if not, you will be the lamb." At which, in this version, the son put his face between his hands and wept.

It was a tale of righteousness that could not but awe. But who would want to be a righteous parent's child?

Of course there were other fathers in Genesis.* There was, for example, Isaac, the child of the *akedah* now become a parent himself. (I ignored then, and forever have ignored, that Isaac is said by rabbinical tradition to have been thirty-seven at the time of the aborted sacrifice. To me he is a child, lying there beneath his father's raised knife.) Isaac married Rebecca, my namesake, who became the mother of the twin boys, Esau and

* And it's only right to remember that even Abraham might, on occasion, try to get God to *change* His word, as he did when he was informed that Sodom was imminently to be destroyed. Abraham had argued that there must surely be at least 50 righteous inhabitants who should not be killed because of the sins of the others. God agreed, but there were no such 50—nor 45, nor 40, nor 30, nor even 10. When Abraham learned that there were not even 10 righteous Sodomite men he accepted the city's doom and was silent. But it was Abraham's pleading that subsequently won Lot and Lot's family their lives.

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Jacob, the fraternal pair who (as I saw and still see them) are the Genesis version of the mind-body problem: Esau, the lusty embodiment of throbbing desire and reckless appetite, living always in the vivid here-and-now, grabbing life with his two great hairy arms; and Jacob, for all his guile, a pure soul, emanating all the otherworldly aspirations of the born saint.

Rebecca, who seemed to me a righteous parent on the model of her father-in-law Abraham, manages to preserve the purity of her vision of the divine priority; and in the light of this vision, she subdues—or perhaps even withdraws—both love and loyalty from Esau, betraying the trust he places in her.

But Isaac, who is also a righteous father, loves Esau. He loves Esau for the things that are good in him—for it *is* good to be in love with life, and how wildly Isaac's own longing for life must have beat in him as he lay bound on his father's sacrificial altar*—and he's blind to the bad that's mixed in with Esau's good, as we all hope that those who love us will be similarly blind. In fact, Isaac loves this prodigal, life-grabbing son so completely that he must be tricked by the clear-sighted and undivided Rebecca into giving the deserving son the blessing that will ensure the preordained dynasty.

Because she was my namesake I wanted to love and admire Rebecca. And I did, and do, admire her. But it's Isaac whom I love. I love this blind and confused father, who can't see clearly because of love, who's so utterly and pitifully confused, because of love.

IV

At my very Orthodox, all-girls high school, those of us who were making plans to continue on to college were warned of the dangers of a secular education. If we felt we had to go to college, said our teachers, then we should at least be aware that there were certain subjects that were much safer than others. Above all, we were admonished, stay away from philosophy, a most dangerous discipline that systematically subjects every article of faith and belief to corrosive analysis and doubt; and the story of the apostate Baruch Spinoza was told to us in details that were meant to horrify.

Don't even look, the teachers said.

So even before I was graduated from high school, I used one of my summer vacations to take a course in philosophy.

Later, during the years I spent as a student of this dangerous discipline, I found a restatement, although in somewhat different terms, of the old dilemma that had first been crystallized for me in the story of Lot's wife, the conflict between the demands of transcendence and the backward pull of love and accidental attachment. Actually the conflict wasn't so much in what I studied—where the claims of transcendence were pretty much one-sidedly championed—as it was in me.

Western philosophy, starting with Plato, introduced me to a notion of transcendence that transcended anything I had encountered in Genesis. Compared to the mother, Irit, Abraham was a figure of terrifying purity. But compared to Socrates on his deathbed, Abraham was a man still mired in the muck of accidental affections.

The life of the righteous men and women of Genesis was, deeply and intensely, a life of familial passions, of family loves and also hates, of family loyalties and betrayals. Qualities of action and of character, including, most importantly, righteousness, saintliness, emerged in the context of family, caught in the given contingencies of those fierce attachments determined through blood. One might be asked to temper this fierceness, and even to overcome a particular attachment if it stood in opposition to the all-transcendent bond to God. But the context as a whole was never challenged as an inextricable aspect of the life represented.

The life of the mind in Western philosophy has nothing at all like this dense emotional context surrounding it. In fact, it's a vision of life as pellucid with rationality as the other is thick with the ties of blood and with the heavy decisions one is asked to make between the orders of one's love.

The first requirement of any system of philosophy is to be free from conceptual contradiction and confusion; and the philosopher asks for something similar in the life he would choose. Toward this end his allegiance is all for transcendence—in the more impersonal form, known as truth, that transcendence takes in this tradition.†

It's not, of course, that all Western philosophers have touted a life of loftiest solitude, although many have. But even among those who give to close personal ties the stamp of rational approval, the mere fact of family relationship has rarely been thought to amount to very much, philosophically speaking.

In the last hours before his death, recorded in Plato's *Phaedo*, Socrates gathers around him his friends and disciples, so that they may engage in one last philosophical discussion, this one focused on the pertinent theme of the soul's immortality. But before the conversation can begin, Socrates (one of the very few "family men" among the notables in the history of Western philosophy, who, almost to a man, were bachelors) orders someone to remove his weeping wife, Xanthippe, and "the little boy." Plato also has

* For this last insight I am indebted to Esti Fass, who, in private conversation, connected Isaac's love of Esau with his own close brush with death.

† Impersonal, that is, as compared to the more personal conception of transcendence represented in the notion of God. It's left open, of course, that the truth might very well *include* the existence of God.

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Socrates declaring that flesh-and-blood children are of little or no account, compared to the ideas, embodied in books, and the disciples that a man leaves behind as his true progeny.* The good life, from the philosophical viewpoint, certainly doesn't require family and children to complete itself.

But it certainly does, from the Jewish viewpoint, where childlessness itself is seen as both a curse and a divine punishment. *Ariri* is the technical term for this punishment, and there is a dispute in the Talmud as to whether *ariri* is implicit or not in the wider punishment of *koret*, which literally means being cut off, and is interpreted as an early death. The Canaanite king, Abimelech, who took Abraham's wife, Sarah, believing her to be Abraham's sister, was temporarily punished with childlessness. And Michal, the daughter of King Saul and the wife of King David, also suffered this punishment:

> And it was so, as the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul looked out at the window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart.

I've always found the dramatic implications of the scene contained in this sentence to be among the richest of any in the Bible. But such considerations aside, David's wife, we are told, was divinely punished for the scorn she harbored for her God-silly husband: "And Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death."

V

And yet, important as the idea of family is in the context of the righteous life, it remains, when all is said and done, only context.

I met a mystical rabbi when I was in Safed, high in the hills in the north of Israel, and he told me a strange story.

We were standing, he and I, in front of the doors of the 16th-century synagogue of the great kabbalistic Master, Rabbi Isaac ben Solomon Luria, known as *ha-Ari*, the Lion. It was exactly here, the rabbi told me, each Friday eve, right before sunset, that *ha-Ari* and his followers would gather, greeting one another and the Sabbath, as they expected at every moment to be greeting the Messiah.

One Friday evening *ha-Ari* appeared before the doors, dressed in the special white garb he wore for the Sabbath. But instead of proceeding into the synagogue, he turned wordlessly away from the door and started to walk. And all the white-robed disciples silently followed the Master out of the city of Safed, and across the fields.

Finally, after they had walked for miles, one of the disciples spoke up.

"Rabbi," he said, "where are you leading us? It's been hours since the Sabbath started. Our wives and our children are waiting for us and surely beginning to worry."

And *ha-Ari* sank down where he stood in the field and began to cry.

At last he was able to speak. "The moment for the Messiah had come," he said, "and I was walking to Jerusalem. But now one of you has questioned, and the moment is gone."

The rabbi who told me this story was obviously very moved by it, and I was, too, though there's little doubt that we were responding to quite different aspects. It's clear that his thoughts were all on the Master, and the tragedy of that lost moment; while I could only think of the disciple, who had looked back to the hills of Safed, where his family was waiting.

VI

My father did come up with several more midrashim regarding Lot's wife. One of the midrashim tried to explain why it was salt, of all things, that she became.

Irit, said this midrash, always used to skimp on the salt in the food she served. When the two messengers, who of course were angels, came to Lot's house to warn him of the imminent destruction, he ordered his wife to serve them a meal, and this time to salt the food properly. So she went around borrowing salt from all the neighbors, in this way spreading the word that the household had visitors, which was a species of persons dangerously unwelcome in the sinful town of Sodom. Because of her action a crowd of evil intent soon gathered around Lot's house, demanding that they be allowed to have a go at the strangers. The inhabitants of the house were only saved because of the angels, who blinded the men, young and old, who stood at the entrance. The blindness began with the young because it was they who had instigated the mob.

My father simply offered me this midrash, without suggesting that he thought it supplied the final resolution to the conflict we both felt on looking back at Lot's wife.

VII

On the one hand, I still remember my father's admission of confusion about Irit's fate, and the knowledge and comfort I gathered from his confusion. On the other hand, my father never could work up any enthusiasm for the luminous vision of the life of pure reason I tried to paint for him. I argued that it was the life that was the most consistent and thus

* In the *Republic* Plato attempts to construct a society in which the force of the ties of blood will be effectively neutralized, with children being held collectively and the facts of who is the biological relation of whom concealed.

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right. He agreed with me that it was consistent, but he wouldn't agree that it was right. In fact, he thought it was all wrong. He thought it was right for human life to be subject to contradictions, for a person to love in more than one direction, and sometimes to be torn into pieces because of his many loves. I suspect he even felt a little sorry for any great man of ideas who had cut himself off, so consistently, from what my father saw as the fullness of human life.

But now, only recently, I've discovered a commentary on the story of Lot's wife that I wish I might have been able to talk over with my father.

Rabbi David Kimchi (a 13th-century exegete known by the acronym Radak) points out that in Genesis it is sulfur and fire that are said to have rained down on Sodom. But in Deuteronomy, when Moses, before dying, warns the children of Israel not to repeat the sins of the past, he speaks of sulfur and *salt* as having been poured onto the doomed city. In the course of explaining the discrepancy, Radak says that in fact all the people of Sodom became pillars of salt. The outcome of the physical devastation wrought upon Sodom was that the place itself became sulfur, while the people became salt.

Hence, at least if one follows Radak, it seems that Lot's wife was not the spectacular aberration I had always thought her. Her fate was continuous with those who had been left behind. Suddenly I felt the whole story of Lot's wife shifting.

She was told not to look and she looked, says the Bible. And her punishment came swift and horrible, added my teacher, following the traditional interpretation I too had thought inevitable. But I read the story differently now:

Irit looked back to see if her two first-born daughters were following, and she saw that they weren't and what had become of them.

In such a moment of grief one knows only one desire: to follow after one's child, to experience what she's experienced, to be one with her in every aspect of suffering. Only to be one with her.

And it was for this desire that Irit was turned into a pillar of salt. She was turned into salt either because God couldn't forgive her this desire . . . or because He could.

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The Young People's Party

A Story

Jennifer Moses

THE summer after I was graduated from law school, I moved to Washington to work at the law firm of Freid and Heller, which people called "Fried in Hell." It was a second-rate firm, small, shabby, on 14th Street north of New York Avenue. No one I knew had ever worked there before.

My father had found me the job. My father, a lawyer, knew a lot of people around town. He knew Freid. He found me the job after I called home, in late April, to tell my mother that my marriage was off, she should cancel the caterers. "What do you *mean* the marriage is off?" she said. "I've already arranged *everything*." My mother lived for weddings. She had already given three, for my three older sisters. "The flowers are going to be absolutely magnificent," she said. There was a long silence. Then she said: "Maybe we'll give you a young people's party, instead." I didn't know what she was talking about.

A minute later my father got on the phone. "What are you going to do?" he said. I started sobbing. "Don't worry, Emma," he said, "I'll get something for you."

So instead of getting married in my parents' backyard (there was going to be a *chuppah* made of white roses and lace, a string quartet, a striped tent) and then taking an extended honeymoon (first to the Italian Riviera, where a friend of my fiancé's family was to lend us a house for a month, and then to Rome), I lived at home, in Bethesda, and worked at Fried in Hell on a case involving trademark regulations. I was the summer associate on the case. The senior associate was Jim Lazarus. There was nothing remarkable about him. He looked and acted just like everyone else. Which is to say that he wore horn-rimmed glasses and conservative suits, and, though just past thirty, was losing his hair. It was black, thinning on top, and peaked slightly in the middle, where he had let it grow longer and combed it, sideways, over the thin spot. He nodded to me in the hallways, and, once, smiled sweetly to me across the firm's cafeteria. I smiled back. He was gunning for partnership. He put in crazy hours.

After work, I would come home and cry. "The best thing for you to do is get back out there and date," my mother told me. "Isn't there anyone nice at the firm? There must be some nice young men there." I thought about Jim Lazarus, about his thinning hair. I told my mother about him. I said, "Well, there's Jim Lazarus, but I don't like him."

In early July, he hosted a party for the summer associates. It wasn't really his party, since the firm was paying for it, but he was nervous about it, anyway. "The pressure's really on," he told me. "Gotta look good for the partners." Then he told me about his neighborhood. "I like to think of it as the Greenwich Village of Washington," he said. "Very mixed. *Very* ethnic." He lived in Adam's Morgan. "Lots of homosexuals," he said.

He had the top two floors of a new building halfway up a hill off 18th Street. The apartment was utterly without distinction. The furniture was covered in the kind of nubby off-white fabric that's designed to come off in little balls between your fingers. In the corners were a few scraggly plants of the sort that adorn hotel lobbies. The one nice thing about it was the view—of the Cathedral, and beyond that, the electric-red blaze that was Wisconsin Avenue, and beyond that, a soft, hazy glow of greenish-gray: Washington in the summer, hills and houses, automobile emissions, heat, and the dense wet green of well-manicured, well-watered lawns. It was the Washington that I remembered from my childhood—the city of lawyers chatting on summertime patios, the paper lanterns strung across the trees, the hors d'oeuvres wilting on brightly colored platters.

The other summer associates and I drank beer and wine on the roof deck, and talked about what we were going to do after the summer. Now and then a partner or a senior associate would come out, and we'd all stop talking. Dinner was served. We ate pasta salad and fancy sandwiches, and then, around nine, someone put a record on the stereo and people started dancing. I sat down. I don't like to dance. It makes me feel weird. John, my ex-fiancé, was a great dancer, an *enthusiastic* dancer. He danced with energy, with fury, twirling me around like a top, twisting me under his arms, spinning me through space.

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Jim Lazarus came up to me and said, "Why aren't you dancing?" When I told him I didn't like to dance, he said, "Nonsense." Then he took my hands and pulled me to my feet, and we did a kind of out-of-sync two-step together, with his hands at my waist, and mine, flopping awkwardly, out of place on his shoulders.

As we danced, he told me about NYU, where he'd been on *Law Review*. I told him I'd gone to Columbia, where I hadn't been on *Law Review*. He said, "Oh." Then he told me not to worry about it. "Some of the smartest people I know didn't make it," he said. When the song was over, I excused myself and sat down.

When I got home, I told my mother about it. I said, "It was just completely a drag." She sat and listened. When I was done, she said, "I think we should have a party, here."

SO HAPPY was my father when I decided to go to law school, you would have thought that he'd just been presented with his first-born: with a son—a David, a Jonathan. To my father, there was no greater profession. "You're a natural," he said, "It's in the genes." During my first year, he telephoned me daily to discuss the cases in my casebook. During my second year, when I was going out for *Law Review*, he called to talk about my note topic. He wanted me to write on the subject he himself had written on, in 1949: Can the Negro Be Freed by Law Alone? My topic was municipal liability for police misconduct. He was convinced, when I didn't make it, that I would have if I'd done the Negroes instead.

At the age of sixty-six, he was still putting in long hours—twelve-hour days, weekends, nights—for what he called the "sheer pleasure" of it. His office had an Oriental rug and a view of the White House, and the younger lawyers were scared of him. They called him "H.B."—short for "Hard Butt." He was known to be short-tempered, well-prepared, and impatient. Stories circulated about him: how, in 1964, he had lost a case in Ohio, and thereafter wouldn't speak to the associate who had been assigned to him; how he once threw a paperweight out the window; how he could give you a look so withering that it made you want to go in your pants. Etcetera. I once went out on a date with a guy who told me that my father was the most despised man in his law firm. "No kidding," he said, laying his hand on mine. We were at a French restaurant, and he had just ordered in French. "H.B.? People really hate him." I looked at him—at his bland expression, his horn-rimmed glasses, his thinning hair—and thought about doing something really dramatic. I thought about throwing my glass of water in his face. I thought about slapping him. I thought about saying "F—— you." I didn't. I blushed, then said, "Really?"

When we were children, my father used to speak about one day starting a firm called "Posner, Posner, Posner, Posner, and Posner." But one by one my three older sisters took up something else, and then, in chronological order, fell in love and got married. Each was married in the backyard of my parents' house in June. Each time the house filled with boxes delivered by the UPS man, and people said, "Have you ever seen such a beautiful bride?" And my father, it seemed to us, tolerated it, but just barely—he stood there in his tux and tolerated it—but only because he had to. The last time was for my sister Hilary, and I was in baby blue, and happy because I would be next. After the ceremony, my father disappeared. When the time came for the photographer to take the pictures of the wedding party, my mother sent me inside to get him. I found him in his study, sitting in the armchair across from the bookshelves. He was gazing at the bookshelves, at the titles of the books. He was drinking Scotch.

"Emma," he said when he saw me. "Don't do this to me. Don't do this to your old man."

"Mom wants you," I said.

"Don't get married," he said.

On Father's Day my sisters sent chirpy, cheerful cards, cards in the shape of Donald Duck or Snoopy, cards that read, "To the Greatest (Grand)Dad in the Whole Wide World," signed with their children's names. My mother taped them on the refrigerator door and they yellowed in the sun.

At my last sister's wedding, I danced because I was happy, and didn't care if I looked bad. I danced with John. But eventually he got tired of dragging me around the dance floor, whispering "one, two, one, two," into my ear, and went off to find a better partner.

THAT was the thing about John: he was never completely satisfied. He was always searching, always striving. "You shouldn't settle," he'd say. "You should never get completely comfortable in your own skin." I thought he meant that I shouldn't give up on my dreams, no matter what anyone else's opinion might be. But then he broke off the engagement, and everything he had said to me took on a different meaning.

About three weeks before final exams, he had told me that he just couldn't do it. "You just can't do *what?*" I said. We were in Riverside Park, walking, and I remember thinking how lovely it all was: the Hudson shining flat and silvery beneath a soft gray sky, the Palisades rising on the distant shore, the stately old buildings on Riverside Drive.

"I'm not sure you want me to go through with it," he said.

Then the meaning of his words began to dawn on me, and I felt sick. We kept walking, calmly,

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hand-in-hand. We came to a park bench, sat down. "What do you *mean*?" I said.

"Emma," he said, very, very softly. "It's not you."

"What's not me?"

"It's not your fault."

Finally, I got mad, and told him that I knew it wasn't my fault, because I hadn't done anything. "What are you talking about?" I said.

"I think," he said, "that maybe I like, you know."

"'You know?'"

"Men," he whispered.

Then his face crumpled and he began to cry. He liked men? I felt sick all over again. John was tall, athletic, with a square chin, closely shaved. He was also twenty-seven, a fact which I pointed out to him. "Isn't it a little late to be discovering that *maybe* you like men?"

He sat there a little while longer, crying softly, which really made me angry, because I was the one who should have been crying, and instead I was sitting there, calm as ice. Then he told me that he'd been seeing a therapist. "To work it out," he said. "Because, you know, my family is going to be completely horrified." John was clerking that year for a judge in Brooklyn; now he told me that he'd secretly "been seeing" his co-clerk, Eric. (That was the phrase he used, "been seeing.") Eric publicized the fact that he had recently come out of the closet by wearing a small diamond, which he liked to stroke, in his left ear. He was all right, I guess, but I didn't like him, because he was always making jokes that ended with the word "splewy," which was his word for semen.

"So you and Eric are going off into the sunset together?" I finally said.

"We broke up," he said. "But I thought you should know."

Later, he told me that he had wanted to tell me in plenty of time to cancel the wedding plans. "And I wanted to give you enough time to study for finals," he said. He didn't want to screw things up completely for me, he said. "I still love you, Emma," he said. "I always will." But he screwed things up for me anyway.

GIVEN my father's connections, he should have been able to do better for me than Freid and Heller. Freid and Heller was the kind of firm that he himself wouldn't be caught dead in. "C-plus, B-minus at best," is how he described it. His firm, meanwhile, got the best of the yearly law-school crop: the *Law Review* editors, the Moot Court finalists, the honors students. When I was a child, these bright young men (because in those days, of course, there were virtually no women lawyers) would appear on our patio, usually on a Saturday night and usually in mid-July, where they would eat deviled eggs and miniature weenies, and drink vodka-and-tonics. My sisters and I passed the hors d'oeuvres, and, when we got to be a little older, stayed up late to eat with the grownups. One summer, when my oldest sister was in college, she slipped off with one of the guests—his name was Bud—and didn't return until after dinner was served. It was the early 70's: she was wearing a peasant blouse, and no bra, and a skirt that she had made herself from an old pair of blue jeans. Bud had a beard. When they appeared together, back on the patio, my mother looked at them and said, "Uh huh." Later my sister told me that she and Bud had been walking around the neighborhood, just walking and walking, and he had told her that after law school he was going to go down South, to work for the NAACP. When I asked her what the NAACP was, she told me I was stupid.

I never wanted to come back to Washington, partly because of those parties, and partly because of guys like Bud, who worshipped their own potential. I also didn't like the weather. I wanted to stay in New York, where things were grittier. In Washington, everything was muted, civil. In New York, nothing was. I liked that.

But once I was back in my parents' house it was as if no other place had ever existed, or ever could: it was as if their walls, their dinners, the humming of their air-conditioning, and the creaking of their floors were the sole reality the world could ever hold. The rec-room in the basement was still filled with unreturned wedding presents, because, as my mother put it, I "had to face up to the stark reality." The desk drawers in my bedroom were still filled with my old diaries. My stuffed animals still sat on the bed and told me things. *Why don't you get off your tuches and do something*?

About a week after the party at Jim Lazarus's house my mother came into my room, where I was lying on my bed reading a magazine, and said: "How's the third of August for you?"

"What are you talking about?"

"The third of August," she said, sitting down at the end of my bed. "You plan to be here?"

I didn't know what she meant, because other than the fact that I dressed every morning and went to work at Freid and Heller, I had no plans at all. Or, I had plans, but they were rather vague. Plans like: think about where you want to live. And: do something interesting.

"Daddy and I want to do something nice for you," she said, in the same tone of voice that she had used, ten years earlier, when she told me that she wasn't going to let me go with my friends for a weekend in Virginia Beach. "Plus we'd been planning to have a party of some kind—you know, like the kind we used to have, when you were children. So we're going to go ahead and have the young people's party. We're going to invite all the young people we know."

I sat up. My parents had a wide circle of

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friends, but young people, as far as I knew, were not among them. But now my mother was telling me about some people named Holly and Brian, and someone else named Joshua Blumenthal, and someone from Boston whose father had been my father's freshman-year roommate in college, and a bunch of other people, too. Then she named a whole lot of other people—old friends of my sisters who were still in town, and their spouses, associates at my father's law firm, distant cousins. Then she asked me whom, of my friends, I'd like to invite. I thought and I thought, but I couldn't think of anyone. I hadn't spoken to my law-school friends all summer and there was no one at Freid and Heller I liked.

"No one," I said.

"What about Nina?" my mother said.

Nina had been my best friend from first through fifth grades. We used to dress in matching outfits; we were cast together, as twin doves, in the third-grade Christmas/Hanukkah play. I hadn't seen her since 1967.

"Nina?" I said.

"I ran into her mother at Safeway. She says she's going gang-busters. *Very* successful."

"Okay," I said.

"Good," my mother said, and patted my knee.

"You know," Jim Lazarus said the next day, "I'd really like to get to know you better."

"What you see is what you get," I said.

He leaned over my desk, so that his tie—dark red and dark blue stripes, too shiny—flopped down. "No," he said, blushing a little. "I mean, *out* of the office."

"Out of the office?"

"I mean," he said, "these things can be awkward."

"What things?"

"Will you have dinner with me some time?"

"No," I said. Then, when I saw him blush again, this time more deeply, I said, "I'm sorry. I don't exactly mean 'no' in the sense of 'no, never, never even think of it.' I'm just kind of out of it right now. I'm not really dating."

"It wouldn't be a date," he said.

"Sorry," I said. Then I said: "Really I am." He looked so pathetic, with his shiny tie, his glasses. Little beads of sweat had popped out on his forehead, and he brushed them away with the back of his hand.

When he left, a moment later, I thought about the first time John and I had gone out. We'd met in Contracts—we were in the same study group. So we never really had a date—we just kept going out for Chinese.

But now it dawned on me—really for the first time—that even then he'd been dropping hints. Once he told me about some Eastern religion class he'd taken in college: he explained how ancient cultures worshipped both the feminine and the masculine within a single person. "What do you think, Emma?" he said another time. "Have you ever thought of yourself as being both male and female?"

I turned back to my work. I was doing some research on recent D.C. circuit rulings on the transfer of trademark rights. My eyes glazed over. I thought about how people change. My oldest sister, who had once worn peasant blouses and had filled our house with talk about the Rights of the People, had married a stockbroker and become a Republican. My fiancé, who had once loved me, no longer did. I went downstairs and got a candy bar, and then, even though it was only about two in the afternoon, left.

As the day of the young people's party approached, my mother got busy. She sat at her desk, going through her various lists of addresses. These were lists she had garnered from years of giving parties—for my father's clients and fellow partners, for my three older sisters' weddings, for our bat mitzvahs. From these lists she culled a new list, which she then wrote onto a fresh piece of paper under the heading "Young People." I guess it had been hard on her, having to cancel all her wedding-giving plans; now she had all this excess mother-of-the-bride energy stored up. It made her fidgety. It was all she could do, in fact, *not* to return my wedding presents for me. She loved bridal registries and tableware departments, and whenever she went shopping she gravitated toward them like a dog to dinner. She couldn't get enough of it, couldn't stop herself from turning over dishes to see their make, envisioning dinner parties lit by new crystal candlesticks, talking about "good sets" and "everyday sets." She knew all the best makers of sterling silver, the difference between French- and American-made porcelains, the subtleties of cocktail glasses.

After the invitations went out she started to think about other things. She called me at work to ask about the flowers. "What do you prefer?" she said. "Baskets or glass bowls?" I told her that it was up to her. When I got home, she announced that she had finally decided on baskets. "So much more festive," she said. A few days later, she said: "Do you think a cold buffet would work—you know, a little poached salmon with dill, that sort of thing—or do you think people are more comfortable being served?" I told her that I didn't think it mattered.

"Everything matters," she said.

Finally she told us that she had finalized her plans. My father and I were sitting at the table, eating, and she was standing behind us, waving a salad spoon back and forth like a baton. She said that she was going to do a hot-and-cold buffet, with a lot of salads and pasta, and fish. But she

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was not going to do hard liquor. "Just beer, wine, and champagne, for spritzers," she said. "Don't you think that'll be nice?"

I looked at my father, who was looking at the wall. He was probably thinking about work.

"What do you think, dear?" she asked my father.

He blinked. Then he said, "What about Scotch?"

"Young people these days don't drink Scotch," she said.

I HADN'T always been like that. I hadn't always been so reactive, so passive and dependent. I hadn't gone along with things my mother wanted me to do, just because she wanted me to do them. I used to make plans—big plans: go to Europe; learn Hebrew; become editor of the *Law Review*. My first year of law school, my father and I had sat down and planned my entire career: honor student, *Law Review* (he said any position would do, but personally he thought editor or managing editor would be the best match for my skills), a ninth-circuit clerkship (he named two judges in particular whom he admired), followed by a Supreme Court clerkship, and then—who knew? A spot in the Solicitor General's office? A special assistantship? Teaching? "The sky's the limit," he said. I was happy: I had just met John, just passed my first set of exams, just gotten a new haircut that made me look a little like Liza Minelli, and I believed him. That's why I'd been so amazed when he called me in April to tell me about the job he'd found for me at Freid and Heller. "You mean Fried in Hell?" I said.

"Herb Freid is an old friend of mine," he said.

The fact is, I wasn't the talented one. John was. John understood concepts before they were explained to him. I had to work at it, grinding it out until I had reached some semblance of an argument. And the satisfaction I derived had more to do with the idea of myself as an attorney than from the work itself. So in some ways Fried in Hell suited me. The work was viewed as just that—work, with no deep, constitutional connotations, no layerings of meaning behind the apparent one. People got rich there, but they didn't get famous. Unlike my father's office, which was crammed with photographs of himself with important people, the offices of the partners at Freid and Heller were decorated with tasteful prints depicting city streets or children playing.

I had planned to move to L.A.—John had landed a teaching job there, and, naturally, I was going to follow. But when, in April, my marriage was canceled, I called the firm where I'd gotten a job and told them that I wouldn't be joining them. "Gee, that's too bad," the hiring partner said. "Well, have a nice day." And now I didn't know where to go. My mother thought I should take some time off, maybe go visit my older sisters. My father thought I should stay in Washington. "You don't know it yet," he said. "But you're just like your old man."

"I am?"

"Blood and bones," he said.

ON THE afternoon of the young people's party my mother presented me with a new dress. "I saw it at Saks and couldn't resist," she said. It was a purple, sleeveless shift, like something Jackie Kennedy would wear. "Thanks," I said. My mother had in fact had one just like it about twenty years earlier; she'd worn it to the summer associates' party that she and Dad gave that July. The purple had made her skin look white as china, and her hair—which was pure black—had been piled and puffed on top of her head.

"It's to wear tonight," she now said.

I looked at it, on its hanger from Saks, and felt a new wave of depression hit me. My wedding dress—my beautiful, beautiful wedding dress—was still hanging in my mother's closet because it couldn't be returned. It was white silk, what the saleswoman had called a "summer silk," and glowed like pearls. John, who was gentle and sweet and brilliant, and whom I loved as I'd never loved anyone, was making plans to relocate to Los Angeles without me. The research I was doing on trademark regulations was boring, and I didn't know where to live.

"Don't worry," my mother said, patting my hand. "Everything will turn out to be just fine."

Around six, the guests started arriving. My old friend Nina, whom I hadn't seen since 1967, showed up with her husband and baby. I didn't recognize her. She was wearing little gold blobs on her ears, and the same kind of sexless dress—a smattering of pastel blooms—that our third-grade teacher, Mrs. Demavoy, had worn on Parents' Day. She told me that she was press secretary to some Senator from the Midwest. "I do a lot of traveling," she said. "What are you up to these days?" I told her about my job at Fried in Hell.

By seven, the party was in full swing. People kept coming up to me and introducing themselves. They said things like, "It's awfully nice of your parents to have us over," and then, nodding, waited for me to supply the other side of the conversation. My father stood in khakis and a plaid shirt by the kitchen door and drank Scotch. I wanted to go and stand next to him and drink Scotch, too, but my mother wouldn't let me. She led me around, introducing me to people I'd already met: to Holly and Brian, to Joshua Blumenthal, to the guy from Boston whose father had been my father's freshman-year roommate in college. Then she brought me over to the corner of the patio where some old friends of my sisters

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were sitting. "This is Emma, the baby," she said. "Can you believe it?" A little while later, I heard a voice behind me, saying, "You *must* be Emma's dad. It was so good of you and Mrs. Posner to invite me," and I turned around and saw Jim Lazarus from Freid and Heller.

"Mom," I said. "What the f—— ?"

I don't think she heard me, though, because she kept on smiling, and introducing me, and asking people how they were.

I felt like I was going to explode. Finally I broke loose, went into the study, poured myself a Scotch, and sat down in my father's chair. I looked at the bookshelves, at the titles of the books. After a few minutes, I heard footsteps approaching. I turned to greet my father—to sob on his shoulder and tell him the whole ugly story. But when the footsteps stopped, it was Jim Lazarus in the doorway. His thinning hair was combed neatly over the bald spot.

"Your mother was right. She said you'd be here," he said.

"Did she?"

"She's really very nice," he said. "Your mother, I mean."

"I hate this," I said.

He came over and sat down in the chair opposite mine. "She said I should come get you. She said I should bring you back outside, to the party."

I didn't say anything. He sighed and said, "So this is where you grew up?" It was really all too much for me—the party, the purple Jackie Kennedy dress, the Chinese lanterns strung across the patio as they had been twenty years ago when my sisters and I got to stay up late and help my mother pass the cheese platter. I began to cry. Jim Lazarus pulled a handkerchief out of his pocket and gave it to me, which made me cry harder. When I was done he asked me why I was so sad. I told him about John, and Eric's splewy jokes; I told him about how I'd had to cancel my marriage, and about how I'd spent the last several months in a state of something approaching vegetable life. Then he came over and put his arms around me, and I cried on his shirt.

Around eleven, when my mother came into my room to kiss me goodnight, she told me that she thought Jim Lazarus wasn't so bad. "I think he's kind of sweet," she said.

"He's all right," I said.

"What about the party?" she said. "Did you like the party?"

I looked at her—the black hair now streaked with gray, the pale skin, the stubborn nose. "I think people had a good time," I said.

"Next time I'll have more fresh fruit," she said. "People like that kind of thing." She patted my knee. And then she leaned over and turned off the light.

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The Might and the Right

Ruth R. Wisse

THE near-hegemony of liberal attitudes in the North American media ensures that in any election, only one outcome will ever be hailed with enthusiasm. But reactions to the victory of Labor over Likud in the June election in Israel went far beyond the predictable crowing of liberals.

Indeed, the relatively slight shift of the Israeli vote from cluster Right to cluster Left that defeated Yitzhak Shamir and made Yitzhak Rabin Israel's new Prime Minister* was interpreted on all sides as a redemptive moment in the Middle East, the dawn of a messianic age, with Rabin as the "Prince of Peace" (not "peace in our time," noted the Baltimore *Jewish Times*, but "peace next week").

Thus, Jesse Jackson made one of the solitary references to foreign affairs heard at the Democratic national convention when he cited Rabin's election as the source of new hope in the world. But the delight of the Republican White House at the victory of Labor was, if anything, even greater than the pleasure of the left-wing Democrats. And no wonder: President Bush was credited by some analysts with having decisively influenced the outcome of the election by withholding U.S. loan guarantees from Shamir's government.

This delirious reaction to Rabin's victory, so unusual in both its intensity and bipartisanship, underscores how successfully the image of Israel has been reshaped during the past twenty years from that of a democratic country trying to stave off the Arab war against it to a nation divided between peace-loving progressives and land-hungry fanatics, only the former of whom may be entrusted to rule.

Among American Jews, no one has done more to promote this altered perception of Israel than Arthur Hertzberg, one of the central figures of the American Jewish establishment. Rabbi for 40 years of a wealthy Conservative congregation, editor of an anthology (*The Zionist Idea*) that still serves as the basic English-language reader for the history of Zionism, frequent contributor to such publications as the New York *Times* and the *New York Review of Books*, long-time vice president of the World Jewish Congress, and former president of the American Jewish Congress, Hertzberg is one of the few contemporary Jewish leaders who is also learned in the Jewish tradition. The publication of his collected essays, *Jewish Polemics*,† allows us to follow in some detail the arguments he has used in representing the government of Israel under Menachem Begin and then Yitzhak Shamir as morally unfit to rule, and in urging American Jews as well as the general American public to cease defending so wicked a country.

According to Hertzberg's view of recent Israeli history, the corruption of the Jewish state set in with its quick victory over the combined Arab armies during the Six-Day War of 1967.

This exceptional military triumph (which resulted in 777 Israeli casualties rather than the 40,000 that had been anticipated on the eve of battle) gave Jews for the first time in their entire history a false trust in power. "It would, I now believe, have been better had the Six-Day War ended in a draw and not in a series of stunning victories," Hertzberg wrote in 1987. For not only did the "tragedy of victory" corrupt Israelis with its dangerous triumphalism, it also turned American Jews into priests in the cult of Israel worship. "If Jews were now to be proud and unafraid everywhere, then Israel, which was the source of this pride, could not ever be seen as wrong." In the Six-Day War, then, began the inordinate Israeli investment in might, and the slavish capitulation of American Jews to that might as right.

Hertzberg does not tell us how many battles Israel would have had to lose in 1967 or how many casualties it would have had to sustain for the war to have ended in a draw. But not even the almost catastrophic Yom Kippur War of 1973 satisfied his idea of a proper victory, since from that war, too, the Israelis learned the wrong lesson, which was that "what the country wins in war it usually loses at the diplomatic table."

He allows that the Israelis reached this conclusion because both the United States and the Soviet Union imposed a cease-fire toward the end in order to save the encircled Egyptians from a humiliating surrender. Yet he mocks this "proof" (he himself puts the word in quotation marks) of Israel's isolation.

Significantly passing over the 1970's altogether, Hertzberg rushes on to what he considers the ultimate consequence of the Six-Day War—the 1982 invasion of Lebanon. Flaunting and misusing the power they had acquired in 1967, Israelis in their hubris thought they could salvage the relatively friendly government of Lebanon by destroying the Palestinian bases which had been set up there.

IT WAS not, however, Lebanon, but the accession of Menachem Begin and the Likud party to power five years earlier, in 1977, that had sent Hertzberg himself to war—a war

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* See David Bar-Illan's "Why Likud Lost—And Who Won" in last month's issue of COMMENTARY.

† Columbia University Press, 272 pp., $27.95.

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against what he was already coming to see as a Jewish state which had lost its moral purpose. To be sure, as late as 1979, in an open letter to Begin protesting the creation of the settlement Elon Moreh, he could still write, "Of course I continue to support you, like all Jews, as the leader of Israel." But soon enough he was singing a different tune: "My own fear is not that Begin will fail but that he will succeed."

Fueled by this fear, Hertzberg abandoned all support for Begin, and later for his successor Shamir, and began calling for unified American Jewish opposition. By 1987, when Elie Wiesel refused to sign a statement attacking the policies of Israel, Hertzberg accused him of immorality, invoking the Jewish prophets, the Holocaust, the history of Jewish slavery in Egypt, Rabbi Levi Yitzkhok of Berdichev, and Rabbi Menahem Mendl of Kotsk. "Elie," he wrote, "you belong on the other side. . . . You belong among those who speak truth, even to Jewish power, and who do not look away because of real or invented Jewish weakness." In Hertzberg's eyes, not only was any defender of Israel now implicitly a supporter of the sinful policies of the Likud, but anyone who "kept silent" and refrained from attack—especially after the *intifada* had begun—was guilty of abetting those sins.

Furthermore, since the Jewish state could no longer be counted on to act wisely, let alone morally, Hertzberg asked that it be placed in political receivership by the Soviet Union and the United States. "Why, then, don't the superpowers try to stop this growing tragedy, for only they have the power to do so?" he wrote in 1988. He was pleased that the Soviet Union was now considered acceptable to the United States as a party to negotiation, and warning repeatedly against the right-wing fanaticism of Israeli extremists who were a mirror-image of Muslim and Arab militants, he called for an international conference that could force Israel to make whatever concessions might be considered necessary.

Finally, his fury with Israel spilled over into a condemnation of American Jews, particularly those who had turned their backs on the best Jewish traditions by continuing to defend that immoral country. The worst were the Jewish neoconservatives who had assumed "the most vigorous anti-Soviet posture being expressed in America in the mid- and late 1970's" and who supported Israel as a bulwark against Soviet expansion in the Middle East. Nor did the fall of the Soviet Union change any of Hertzberg's ideas. Citing the dangerous instability that followed the collapse of Communism, he went on to advance the same arguments against Israel and its American defenders as before.

Perhaps because Arthur Hertzberg likes to use Yiddish expressions, I kept thinking as I read these essays (many of them not for the first time): *A toyber hot gehert, vi a shtumer hot dertseylt, az a blinder hot gezen, vi a krumer iz gelofn*—A deaf man heard a mute telling of a blind man who saw a lame man sprinting. Arguments like Hertzberg's are—or ought to be—enough for anyone with ears, eyes, a tongue to speak, and the physical capacity to act, to try to reclaim from these distortions at least a measure of truth and scruple.

To BEGIN with, Hertzberg's division of the Israeli polity into a moral sector which is willing to yield certain disputed territories to the Arabs, and an immoral sector which is not willing to yield them, retroactively calls into question the legitimacy of the Zionist enterprise as a whole. For if minimal territory is proof of moral credibility, then the smallest country would necessarily be the most moral, and the absence of any country would be the most moral of all. Indeed, this was precisely the contention of the ideological war against Zionism that was launched by the Arabs under Soviet tutelage beginning in the early 1970's, the very period eclipsed in Hertzberg's historical account.

The Soviets knew exactly what they were doing when they forged a Communist-Arab alliance around the seemingly primitive canard that Zionism was a form of racism. After all, the same attack on Jewish national legitimacy had ensnared almost the entire Jewish intelligentsia in the 1930's, and could be expected to do so again. "Not all Jews are capitalist-Zionist-imperialists," many Jewish intellectuals had protested back then. "There are other Jews like us—socialists, friends of the downtrodden—who have nothing in common with those Jewish bloodsuckers and reactionary bourgeois nationalists." Now, in the 70's, came an updated echo: "Not all Zionists are racists; there are other Zionists—Laborites, friends of the Palestinians—who have nothing in common with those expansionist fanatics of Greater Israel."

In each case the Jewish moral tradition was invoked to justify joining battle against rather than on behalf of the Jews.

So MUCH for Hertzberg's general moral perspective. But moral and historical truth are interdependent, and the skewing of the one requires the sacrifice of the other. Thus, for example, the Six-Day War, described by Hertzberg as the beginning of Jewish triumphalism, was in fact the greatest trauma in the life of Israel, bringing home to natives who had never known it before the reality of Jewish isolation in the world and the ferocious persistence of Arab enmity.

Whatever hopes Israel had in victory for a final settlement with the Arabs were damped almost immediately by the refusal of Arab countries to sue for peace, the War of Attrition along the Suez Canal, the promotion of anti-Israel terrorism through the Palestine Liberation Organization, a stepped-up economic boycott that crippled whole sectors of the Israeli economy, and the growing dependence of Europe and America on Arab oil. Far from accepting Israel, the defeated Arabs tried to crush the country again in their surprise attack of Yom Kippur 1973, then to destroy its moral standing through a worldwide campaign of recycled anti-Semitism.

By the late 1970's, even the most hopeful Israelis began to realize that as long as the Arabs intended to win back what they still considered to be theirs—namely, the whole of Israel—no war was ever likely to be the last, except, of course, if it were lost by Israel.

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To cope with this growing political despair, the citizenry of Israel tried to use one of the few advantages it enjoyed over the Arabs—the right to install new leaders. And the election of Likud in 1977 did indeed work as it was intended to do. It elicited—from Egypt's Anwar Sadat—the first offer of peace from an Arab ruler since the creation of the state.

This election also brought to power a coalition whose leader and many of whose members believed in the Jewish right to Judea and Samaria, land which was legally in dispute and to which Jews had a stronger legal claim than Arabs. Yet the dimensions of Israel were probably not uppermost in the voters' minds in 1977, and certainly not when they reelected Begin in 1981 after he had returned the Sinai to Egypt, delivering it *Judenrein*, cleansed according to Egyptian demands of every last Jew.

To characterize Begin—who was by all accounts the most democratic and law-respecting of all Israeli leaders to date—as morally unfit to rule may have figured in internal Israeli polemics as a low but convenient tactic of partisan politics. But the same charge leveled by prominent Jews in America like Hertzberg, and at a time when the moral credibility of the Jewish state itself was being called into question, strengthened both the anti-Zionist cause and the hand of every politician who wanted to distance himself from Israel in order to curry Arab favor.

Furthermore, in thus demonizing Begin, and Shamir after him, Hertzberg and the growing number of Americans who were persuaded by his line of argument helped to weaken the democratic structure of Israel and to undermine the very political autonomy of the Jews that Zionism had tried to secure. Given Israel's political dependence on the U.S., why should any sector of the Israeli polity henceforth try to influence the local electorate when it could much more easily strike an implicit deal with American Jews and with the American government?

Helped along by just such an implicit deal in the form of the American pressure that contributed so much to toppling Shamir, the Labor party under Rabin has now come to power again. It remains to be seen whether this will turn out to be a good or a bad thing for Israel. It also remains to be seen whether Labor's policy of "trading land for peace" will actually bring peace or make Israel more vulnerable to another attack. But there can be no question that this policy will be perceived by the Arabs not as a resurrection of Jewish moral power, but as a sign of growing Israeli political weakness.

Nor can there be any question about the damage that has already been done by the assault upon Israel's moral character over the past fifteen years, not only by its Arab enemies and their sponsors but also by Jewish polemicists like Hertzberg, who have responded to enmity not by trying to counter it but by condemning their fellow Jews for having brought it upon themselves.

Observations

Goering's Jewish Friend

Bent Blüdnikow

"DO YOU know the name Hugo Rothenberg?"

The man who asked me this question—the year was 1987—was then in his late seventies; *his* name was Gerhardt Riegner. I knew nothing of my fellow Dane, but Riegner himself was familiar enough to me. What he had done on behalf of the Jews during World War II—and especially the role he played in informing the Allies that the Nazis were preparing a final destruction of European Jewry—has been described many times over.

But who was Rothenberg? In 1941 or 1942, Riegner explained, a Danish Jew by that name had come to see him in Geneva, where Riegner was then serving as the representative of the World Jewish Congress. Rothenberg had some remarkably precise things to report about the situation of the Jews in Germany—he was, Riegner recalled, particularly incensed at the "*chutzpah*" of the Nazis in charging the Reich Association of Jews in Germany, the German-Jewish umbrella organization, for the cost of the trains taking German Jews east to ghettos and camps—and Riegner used Rothenberg's information in reports to the Allies and Jewish organizations. In later years Riegner had often wondered about the identity of his informant,

BENT BLÜDNIKOW, *here making his first appearance in* COMMENTARY, *is an archivist at the Danish National Archive and the author of the Danish-language book,* As If They Never Existed: Hugo Rothenberg and the Struggle for German Jewry *(1991).*

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and about how he knew so much concerning the fate of the German Jews.

I promised Riegner I would try to find out. In the end, I published a whole book (in Danish) on the subject.*

ROTHENBERG was born into a bourgeois German-Jewish family in the little town of Bad Kreuznach in 1882. He received his early training in the leather and shoe industry in Frankfurt am Main. After serving his apprenticeship, he traveled to Copenhagen, where the head offices of a number of large industrial leather companies were located and where, on a previous visit, he had made the acquaintance of a young Jewish woman by the name of Asta Meyer. He moved to Copenhagen in 1907, and married Asta in 1910.

Not only did Rothenberg win the bride of his choice, he also succeeded in striking up a friendship with Denmark's leading leather industrialist, Max Ballin. By the end of the war in 1918, Ballin was in need of a young and ambitious business associate with international credentials, and preferably with good connections in Germany. Rothenberg became procurement director for the Ballin industries.

In 1919 a young German flying ace, a hero of the recent war, came to Rothenberg on the recommendation of the German envoy in Copenhagen. The German airman, now demobilized, was eking out a living as a stunt flyer in Denmark. Though successful with the ladies, he had run into severe financial difficulties as a result of his lavish style, and when introduced to the well-to-do Rothenberg in the summer of 1919 he did not hesitate to ask for a personal loan to cover his exorbitant expenses. Rothenberg could easily afford it.

The two men became friends. At the end of 1919, when the German left Denmark for Sweden, he sent Rothenberg a letter:

> . . . My heartfelt thanks to you for all the help you have extended to me. I am ashamed that I have had to rely on you in so many different ways, without in any way being able to reciprocate. However, should it be possible—here or in Germany—for me to return your good offices in some way, please do not hesitate, even slightly, to contact me. As a result of your solicitude I have an unsettled account with you, which I look forward to being able to repay in order to demonstrate my gratitude.
>
> With heartfelt greetings, I remain yours, gratefully,
>
> HERMANN GOERING

DENMARK had prospered during the war by remaining neutral, but the prosperity did not endure. The postwar recession affected Ballin's empire as well. In addition, Ballin had made a fanatical personal enemy of Lauritz V. Birck, an economics professor and conservative member of parliament who hated capitalists and speculators and was a virulent anti-Semite. Birck accused Ballin and Rothenberg of wartime profiteering; in a historic confrontation, he and Ballin clashed during a meeting at which Ballin, pushed to the limit, called Birck "a simple liar and defamer." To this Birck responded by attacking Ballin bodily with a chair, shouting at the top of his voice: "I am a white man, you are Jewish, and a professor at the University of Copenhagen cannot tolerate such language."

In 1921, on the verge of ruin, Ballin shot himself. Rothenberg went personally bankrupt. Although he managed to survive, he never regained his wealth. Instead, he took to traveling around Europe, maintaining his old connections in Germany, where his four sisters still lived, and becoming friendly with German-Jewish leaders. Years later, they turned to him for help.

Nazi anti-Semitism exploded in November 1938 in *Kristallnacht*—the "night of shattered glass"—when Jews were attacked all over Germany, Jewish stores were smashed, and synagogues were burned. It was then that the German-Jewish leader Wilfred Israel (immortalized as the disagreeable Bernhard Landauer in Christopher Isherwood's story, *Goodbye to Berlin*), asked Rothenberg to establish contact with Goering, who at the time was responsible for all matters pertaining to the "Jewish Question" in the German Reich. (This was one of many such efforts on the part of the German-Jewish leadership to communicate directly with high-level Nazis in order to find out more about their plans for the Jews.)

Rothenberg traveled immediately to Berlin, where he was able to meet with Goering in the Air Ministry. His minutes of this and subsequent meetings with Goering have survived. This is from the first, which took place on November 29, 1938:

> . . . I had the opportunity to discuss the Jewish question with complete frankness. I pointed out that in the course of my numerous visits to Germany I had had plenty of opportunity to see for myself that the information trickling out with Jewish emigrants was not exaggerated. I described to him what I myself had been able to observe and quoted examples of atrocities perpetrated during the recent excesses [*Kristallnacht*]. I put the question of whether Goering himself was really convinced that the official German line was correct in maintaining that on that particular Thursday night three or four thousand Germans happened simultaneously and spontaneously to become so incensed about the Grynszpan attack [in which a young Jew of Polish-Jewish extraction had killed a German embassy employee in Paris] that things developed as they did. By a movement of the hand, repeated several times while I was speaking on these matters, I inferred that Goering was conceding that I was right, but his only oral reply was: "You must not forget that many of these people have probably had a Jewish employer at one time or another, and have therefore seized the opportunity to take revenge for their earlier mistreatment. . . ."
>
> I then mentioned the concentration camps, opening with the remark that I could not really understand why he, Goering, had not long before seen to it

* So far as I know, there is no mention of Rothenberg in the published historical literature. The following narrative is based to some extent on his private archives, which are in the possession of his family. (A copy has been deposited with the Leo Baeck Institute of New York.)

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that the camps were placed under the jurisdiction of his own people. I then told him that what had happened and was still happening in the camps was the most atrocious thing ever heard of. I was able to relate to him some examples, for whose veracity I could personally vouchsafe, and particularly one I had only learned about the night before. He was very interested in that particular case, and asked me to ascertain whether the person in question had been mistreated. . . .

Goering openly and without any constraint admitted that especially the last incident [*Kristallnacht*] had been harmful to Germany's foreign trade, and he mentioned specifically that Germany had lost the business of some big foreign department stores, particularly English and American ones. He repeatedly called himself the "*Führer der deutschen Wirtschaft*" [leader of the German economy]. It was clear throughout this conversation that Germany's economy was of exceptional interest to him.

The entire conversation took two-and-a-half hours and slowly it turned into a lively discussion in which we both sometimes strode up and down his office. That the Jews had to leave Germany in any case was beyond question, according to Goering. I repeatedly pointed out to him that if so it was mandatory that emigration take place in a reasonably decent manner. He assured me he would have preferred that many of the events of recent times had not occurred, and he also said, "I can assure you that these incidents cannot and will not be repeated here in Germany, and I am also willing to do my best to ensure a decent mode of emigration."

We also touched upon Palestine as a destination for the emigrants. He expressed surprise at the fact that the Jews were still bent on this goal. He explained his personal views on Palestine, referring to the serious difficulties the English were experiencing in their Mandate territory. Only by including Transjordan in the prospective area of emigration—which he thought would be impossible—might there be a chance [of accommodating the influx of Jews]. His conclusion was that the best one could hope for was to maintain the status quo, that is, the approximately 500,000 Jews now living in Palestine would be able to remain there in peace, but any additional emigration should be resisted.

Among the gentlemen in Berlin, my closest contact has been with Wilfred Israel of the well-known department store N. Israel. Mr. Israel is, in my opinion, the leading person among German Jews, and has contributed on an enormous scale to German Judaism. . . . During my talks with Goering I had occasion to mention Israel, and, at my request, Goering has consented to receive him. In my opinion, this visit will be of the utmost importance, since no German Jew has ever before been able to get into direct contact with one of the leading individuals in the German government. . . .

BETWEEN 1938 and 1941 Rothenberg had several more meetings and telephone conversations with Goering, and also with Jewish leaders all over Europe. During those years Nazi policy toward the Jews remained somewhat inconsistent, varying with the fortunes of one or another element in the internal power struggle of the Nazi party. The SS, with Heinrich Himmler at its head, preferred to get rid of the Jews at a forced clip, by expulsion from Germany—which, since nearly every country in the world had closed its borders to the Jews, would condemn them to life as stateless refugees. Goering, on the other hand, seemed to prefer a "proper" emigration, providing the Jews with visas and tickets in an orderly manner. (No one, as yet, had mentioned extermination camps or gas chambers.) One way or another, until 1941 thousands of Jews were able to emigrate from German lands, to some extent in an orderly manner.

How important a role Rothenberg played in all this, and how much real influence he had with Goering, it is hard to say. It is possible that Goering liked having Rothenberg around only as a point of honor, or even just for the fun of it. An example: Rothenberg, according to his notes, tried to persuade Goering to centralize the Jewish emigration offices in Berlin, as had already been done in Vienna. At one early meeting—on January 27, 1939—Goering sent for the dreaded SS leader, Reinhard Heydrich, and in Rothenberg's presence ordered him to put the visa process under coordinated management. Yet according to other sources, Goering had already decided on a coordinated approach prior to his meeting with Rothenberg, which suggests that he and Heydrich were indulging in a bit of playacting.

Nevertheless, it is my impression that Rothenberg did sometimes succeed in holding Goering to his word about ensuring an orderly emigration. Moreover, on his repeated visits to Berlin he was able to bring crucial information from abroad to such German-Jewish leaders as Paul Eppstein, Otto Hirsch, and Wilfred Israel.

But by 1941 Goering's own glory days were very nearly over. The SS, under Himmler and Heydrich, had been made responsible for the "Jewish Question," and a far more heavy-handed emigration policy was instigated that resulted in the forcible expulsion of Jews to the newly established ghettos in the East.

ALREADY at the end of 1940, Rothenberg sensed the way things were going. Although he kept trying to influence Goering, there was really very little hope from that quarter. It was then that Rothenberg tried to contact Jewish leaders elsewhere—including Gerhardt Riegner in Geneva—and give them what information he had on the plight of the German Jews.

Aside from Riegner, at the end of 1940 Rothenberg was also able to establish a link to the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), which from its European headquarters in Lisbon played a leading role in the effort to rescue European Jews. In the course of 1941, Rothenberg traveled several times to Lisbon, meeting with JDC representatives and bringing them information from Germany. He also became financially responsible for JDC contributions to the refugees in Denmark and, later, Sweden. Since the Allies had decided that the German war ma-

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chine should not be aided in any way, not even by money transfers to suffering Jews, JDC was not allowed to send money to Germany or German-occupied territory, which after 1940 included Denmark. Clandestine channels had to be set up, and Rothenberg became one of them.

HERE a word of explanation may be in order. Since it is widely known that the majority of Danish Jews were rescued in October 1943 by the Danes, who got them safely to neutral Sweden, it might be thought that Denmark would also have been a place of refuge for Jews fleeing from neighboring Germany, and that Rothenberg would have had the cooperation of Danish authorities in the rescue or relief of those Jews. This, however, was far from the case.

Toward *Danish* Jews, Denmark's policy was indeed characterized by solidarity and care. But foreign Jews were not treated so generously. From early on, the Danish authorities held that these people must be prevented from entering the country. After *Kristallnacht* in 1938, the Social-Democratic Minister of Justice, K.K. Steincke, announced in parliament that German Jews did not qualify as refugees and hence were not entitled to asylum in Denmark. He had full parliamentary support for this attitude. Taken as a whole, Danish policy toward non-Danish Jews was no more humane than that of other Western countries, and in certain cases, Danish authorities acted in so cynical and even depraved a manner that to peruse the refugee files today can be a shocking experience.

So Rothenberg could not rely on the Danish government for help. He did, however, have a personal friend at police headquarters in Copenhagen. This man provided Rothenberg with visas to a number of countries that would otherwise not have allowed a Jew to enter, and it was partly through his good offices, as well as through Goering's "benign neglect," that Rothenberg was able to continue traveling in those years. And travel he did, incessantly. One moment he was in Berlin, then he was moving on to Zurich, Brussels, Lisbon, back to Berlin, then on again to Stockholm, Copenhagen, and so forth. Once again it is hard to say precisely what role Rothenberg was playing, although whatever his activities were, they would almost certainly, if discovered, have been construed by the Allies as criminal. In the JDC case file on Rothenberg a slip was attached which reads: "Delete Rothenberg's name from all correspondence."

During this period, Rothenberg met Paul Werner Meyerheim, the financial officer of the Reich Association of Jews in Germany, and the man responsible, among other things, for the distribution of JDC funds. Meyerheim, in 1941, needed somebody who could travel freely in and out of Germany and was able to pass secret information about the plight of the German Jews to Jewish relief organizations abroad. Until 1943 Rothenberg served as the middleman between the Reich Association and the JDC in Lisbon.

In 1943 Rothenberg himself became a refugee, in Sweden. But he did not remain idle there. Goering had a Swedish stepson, Thomas von Kantzow, who occasionally saw his stepfather in Berlin. Rothenberg contacted von Kantzow and pleaded with him to speak to Goering about the concentration camps. Von Kantzow carried out the commission. Did the appeal lead to anything? The American diplomat Ivar Olsen, who represented the U.S. War Refugee Board in Stockholm and was responsible for sending Raoul Wallenberg to Hungary to try and save the Jews there, reported through official channels that the von Kantzow/Rothenberg intervention perhaps helped to mitigate the situation of the Jews in Theresienstadt.

AT WAR'S end Rothenberg returned home. In a grotesque turn of circumstance, however, no sooner had he set foot in Denmark than he was arrested and charged with having been a German spy. He languished in prison for three weeks before being released.

To a man who had risked his life to save his fellow Jews, being accused of spying for the Nazis (to say nothing of the prospect of possible execution) was a devastating blow. Though he was cleared of all charges, the experience left him a broken man. Until the day of his death in 1948, he never mentioned his activities again to anybody. And so, until now, his story has remained untold.

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The Legacy of the 80's

THE SEVEN FAT YEARS AND HOW TO DO IT AGAIN. By ROBERT L. BARTLEY. *Free Press. 256 pp. $22.95.*

Reviewed by GEORGE RUSSELL

ROBERT L. BARTLEY'S book could hardly have arrived at a more appropriate time—his intention, surely, in getting out this pugnacious, opinionated, and entertaining volume before the 1992 election campaign entered its home stretch. As the editor of the *Wall Street Journal*'s editorial and op-ed pages, Bartley has been one of the country's most adept and ardent practitioners of the art of getting conservative ideas—not necessarily orthodox ones—off broadsheets and into minds. Now, as the Reagan-era political coalition that supported so many of those ideas is threatened with meltdown, the crusader has saddled up his warhorse, strapped on the greaves, and sallied forth to battle again. *Someone*, after all, must defend the Reagan era, and Bartley has a better claim to being that champion than does the current occupant of the White House.

Unlike George Bush, Bartley is aware that the legacy of the 1980's is intellectual as well as political, social, and economic. Ideas were what bound together the policies of the Reagan era, policies which in turn made possible the kind of coalition politics that persisted to give Bush his own first presidential term. To help us understand the ideas that fueled the "Seven Fat Years" of his title, Bartley takes us back to the Wall Street eatery where in the late 1970's he and Jude Wanniski, Arthur Laffer, Robert Mundell, and others hammered out their critique of Keynesian economics as that dismal science had been practiced by recent American Presidents.

The counter-prescriptions they came up with—low marginal income-tax rates; a principled antipathy to capital-gains taxes; tough, anti-inflationary monetary policy; porous trade and investment frontiers; a return to something resembling a fixed system of international monetary exchange—were anathema not only to Carter-era Democrats but to conventional Republicans, whose thirst for fiscal-deficit reduction, Bartley reminds us, has been slaked through tax hikes with occasionally disastrous recessive effects (cf., for example, Herbert Hoover). The presidency of Ronald Reagan, however, was another matter.

Bartley's aim, then, is to praise Reaganomics while others aim to bury it. But that is putting his objectives too narrowly. During the Reagan era, he argues, unconventional ideas and concepts, focused primarily on restoring vigor to the American genius for capitalism, came together not only with a President willing to support them but with a technological revolution that only unconventional capitalist tools could finance. The result was the greatest period of sustained growth in American economic history, an energetic time of freedom and enterprise in which Americans at virtually all income levels grew richer.

This, of course, is hardly the way the 80's are routinely seen today. Yet Bartley is unfazed by denunciations of the decade as an era of profligacy, insider-trading, rapacious takeovers, spurious finance—an era of private waste and public squalor. If the ideas of the 80's were so bad, he asks, why have they been adopted by almost every nation in the world desirous of improving its material conditions, and most especially by those who helped to undermine and now have succeeded the Communist empire? Only in America, he muses, could achievement of this order of magnitude be written off so rapidly as failure.

"Perhaps," Bartley writes, "the era of self-realizing pessimism has arrived, perhaps we have left a decade of greed for a decade of envy." An inveterate optimist, he does not really believe that. Indeed, in his effort to recapture the high ground for Reaganomics, Bartley invokes a vision of what he calls a new Belle Epoque, a period of stable, uninterrupted, globally-oriented growth that lies within reach if the lessons of the 80's are not repudiated. A better name might be High Victorianism, after that era of unilateral free trade in which Britain embraced a stable international currency based on gold, the free movement of capital, and untrammeled technological innovation. "If we can overcome the cramped and pessimistic outlook in which we've been nurtured," Bartley enthuses, "those of us living in the 1990's have a chance to try to put the dream together again."

THE capitalist dreamer is Bartley at his most seductive. But Bartley the editorialist has laden *The Seven Fat Years* with some unwieldy freight, including occasionally bewildering thickets of drab economic technospeak. More perilously, by undertaking a wholesale defense of the decade's reputation against the stigma of insider-trading scandals, savings-and-loan debacles, and other signs of capitalism in excess, Bartley has tried to do too much: surely not *everything* about the Reagan 80's needs to be defended as right and good for the attainments of Reaganomics to be established. But none of that diminishes the importance or the interest of a book which it would greatly benefit all, and especially one incumbent, to read.

GEORGE RUSSELL *has written on economics and politics for* COMMENTARY.

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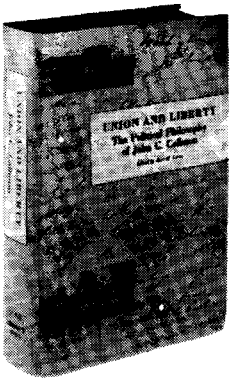

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High Life

BRIGHTNESS FALLS. By JAY MCINERNEY. *Knopf. 416 pp. $23.00.*

Reviewed by EVELYN TOYNTON

"YOU will have to learn everything all over again." So goes the last line of Jay McInerney's first, most entertaining novel, *Bright Lights, Big City* (1984). The sentence could almost be taken as McInerney's own authorial program, since both he and his characters seem, in book after book, to be learning not exactly everything but the same thing all over again. And what do they learn? That the glittering allure of hip parties, fashionable clubs, naughty drugs—and, in *Brightness Falls*, his latest offering, big money—is really only superficial. That happiness is to be found in the simpler, human things of life—in love, kindness, honest work, fresh bread.

One might find McInerney's seeming amnesia baffling—why is he unable to recall, from one book to the next, that he has already helped us see through the hollowness of the flashy milieu he depicts in such loving detail? But of course the forgetfulness serves a useful purpose, offering his readers a double set of thrills: they can lap up his savvy descriptions of the lifestyles of the hip and fashionable and still be left with a warm sentimental glow when the hero or heroine renounces all that jazz and on the final page affirms the primacy of the heart.

McInerney has been praised as a satirist, but he lacks the satirist's penchant for exposing uncomfortable truths, for striking painfully close to the bone; our complacency is never threatened for a minute. "You are not the kind of guy who would be at a place like this at this time of the morning": that is how *Bright Lights, Big City* begins, and even as its narrator keeps snorting coke, dancing the night away, and treating people badly, he assures us in his ruefully charming way that he is not the kind of guy who does any of those things. No, he is deeper than that:

> You keep thinking that with practice you will eventually get the knack of enjoying superficial encounters, that you will stop looking for the universal solvent, stop grieving. . . . You ask yourself: How did I get here?

The answer, in this particular case, is that he got there because his wife left him and his mother died. Similarly, the narrator in *Story of My Life* (1988) got there—i.e., spends her life ingesting controlled substances and sleeping around and figuring out ways to cadge money out of people—because her parents never gave her any love and her father poisoned her favorite horse for the insurance money. But she too is a superior soul: she keeps telling us in between snorts how much she hates dishonesty in all its forms.

The same strategy is at work in *Brightness Falls,* which attempts to satirize the lives led by three successful New Yorkers in the 80's while making the major characters themselves wholly sympathetic. The novel consists of one desperately manufactured disaster after another: a failed takeover attempt of an important New York publishing firm, a bout with anorexia, financial collapse, incarceration in a drug-rehabilitation clinic, a beached whale, infidelity, betrayal, separation, a street riot, a death from AIDS. All these events, which never manage to seem inevitable, are intended to have a larger significance as part of the impending collapse of our corrupt civilization: "For lately it seemed . . . that the horsemen of the apocalypse were saddling up, that something was coming to rip huge holes in the gaudy stage sets of Ronald McDonald Reaganland." They are also meant to serve as backdrop for the moral struggle, such as it is, of the main characters.

Unfortunately none of these characters, good, bad, or in-between, is in the least compelling. If this novel is less charming than its predecessors—in fact it is strangely lifeless much of the time—that may be partly because it is narrated in the third person. The distinctive voices McInerney was able to create for the narrators in his other two New York novels at least made them vividly present to us, whereas all the main characters in *Brightness Falls* remain fatally indistinct. Tired and glib as is McInerney's satire of ambitious young mergers-and-acquisitions specialists, Eurotrash party-hoppers, fashion models, and self-made billionaires on their second wives, his characterizations of them are positively sprightly next to his renderings of supposedly three-dimensional persons.

The strongest, deepest relationship in the novel is meant to be that between Russell, an up-and-coming book editor, and his stockbroker wife Corrinne, whose moral virtues McInerney insists on with particular heavy-handedness: not only does she brood at regular intervals about the plight of the unfortunate, and volunteer once a week at a mission for the homeless, but she also has deep feelings of ambivalence about her work—"Maybe there was something wrong with her, that she hadn't been able to turn into an actual stockbroker with a stockbroker's haircut and wardrobe and way of looking at the world"—and ends up befriending a pathetic widow whom she has prospected for business. Yet here she is, newly pregnant, talking with her husband:

> "God [he says], I've been such a jerk lately, haven't I?"
> "Maybe just a tiny bit of a jerk."
> "I've been a pig."
> "But now you're cured." She giggled. "A cured pig. A ham, I guess that makes you."
> "You're going to be an extremely silly mother."

And so forth.

MCINERNEY's stated aim in *Brightness Falls* was to write "Tom Wolfe's *Bonfire of the Vanities* with real people in it." But there are neither real people nor real satire here. Tom Wolfe may not be enough of a savage moralist, *à la* Evelyn Waugh, to be a great satirist, but he is savage enough to skewer his characters' pretensions with real glee. McInerney may simply be too happily at home in his

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EVELYN TOYNTON *reviewed* The Columbia History of the American Novel *in our July issue.*

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world to summon up much gusto for skewering, and he seems to have no opposing vision of what ought to be, apart from a pious, half-hearted belief—maybe it is something someone told him once—that greed is a very bad thing and people should not care about status, riches, and success, but rather about the homeless, and being nice to their friends and spouses. If he expects to continue being a novelist, he will have to learn everything all over again.

On Faith

THE AMERICAN RELIGION: THE EMERGENCE OF THE POST-CHRISTIAN NATION. By HAROLD BLOOM. *Simon & Schuster. 288 pp. $22.00.*

Reviewed by
RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS

IF ONE takes enough stabs in the dark, one is bound to hit upon the occasional truth. And if one is as incorrigibly clever and eclectically erudite as the well-known literary critic and amateur Bible scholar Harold Bloom (he of *The Book of J*), the averages improve somewhat. Or so one would think. *The American Religion*, however, disproves the rule.

Bloom is aware that there are those who might question his credentials when he claims to be a "religious critic." (By this he does not mean that he is a critic who is religious. He tells us that he is a "gnostic Jew" who is not quite up to trust in God and all that.) But credentials, in the sense of mastery of a subject, are rather beside the point to this critic who sees his intellectual task not as interpreting reality but as offering "strong misreadings" which create realities not previously suspected.

Bloom has obviously been brooding about religion in America for some time, and all in all he does not seem to care for it very much. At least he does not care very much for the religion espoused by nearly 90 percent of the American people. Traditional forms of normative Christianity and Judaism, he assures us, are vestigial European imports that have never really taken root in America. Those traditions are but the veneer over the real "post-Christian" (and, presumably, post-Jewish) religion of America, which is gnosticism.

Now gnosticism (from the Greek word for knowing) is a term of wondrous plasticity. By it Bloom seems to mean the belief that human beings are inherently immortal, possessed of divine sparks that can be actualized in the solitary and transcendent self. (Emerson is everywhere in Bloom's ponderings.) Whatever Americans may say they believe, this is in fact what, according to Bloom, they do believe. To the extent that his book is about any one thing, it is about the failure of Americans to recognize and embrace the religion which Bloom says is authentically theirs.

A case in point is the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), the country's largest Protestant association. Bloom tells us that his understanding of that community is derived from a colleague at Yale (where Bloom teaches English) who must remain anonymous lest he become the victim of retaliation by the fundamentalists who have in recent years taken over and dreadfully distorted the SBC.

From his anonymous source Bloom has learned to admire Edgar Young Mullins (d. 1928) who, despite having written *The Fundamentals* (from which fundamentalism takes its name), is depicted as a most agreeable gnostic. Even Mullins, however, did not get the American Religion quite right, for he lacked the nerve to go all the way and affirm what Bloom calls "the nakedness of the soul." As for today's Southern Baptists, they simply fail to live up to their creed. Bloom describes the true Baptist:

> She [*sic*] knows, beyond knowing, that she is no part of the Creation, and she possesses the other American knowledge also,

RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS *is editor-in-chief of* First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life. *His most recent books are* America Against Itself *(Notre Dame Press) and* Doing Well and Doing Good *(Doubleday).*

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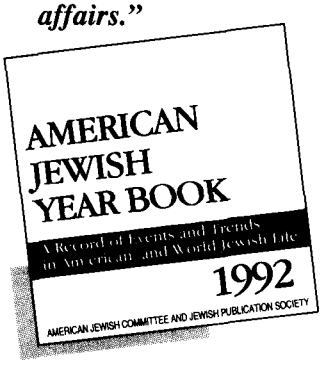
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> the freedom that is wildness, total spiritual solitude.

Never mind that this is not and never has been the Baptist creed. Bloom knows that it ought to be.

OTHERS besides Southern Baptists have likewise failed in their adherence to the American Religion. Take, for example, Joseph Smith (d. 1844), founder of the Mormons, whose strong and indeed fanciful misreading of the Hebrew scriptures and almost everything else brings Bloom close to the "ecstasy" for which he says he is looking. In Bloom's reading, Smith was wild, solitary, defiant, and plumb crazy enough to merit the title of "religious genius." But, as one might expect, the Mormons have ruined Mormonism, domesticating the ecstasy in order to construct a bourgeois empire that is, once again, the enemy of the true American Religion.

Mary Baker Eddy and Christian Science also come in for major attention—Bloom does not like them at all—and cheap shots are taken at Jimmy Swaggart and others who have soiled their nests in prime time. And so it goes. No wonder that Bloom ends on a distinctly discouraged and discouraging note. The future, he writes, is grim. The Southern Baptist Convention is increasingly the Established Church of the South and Southwest, while the Mormons are becoming the Established Church of the West. Together, they are gaining a stranglehold on the American spirit. Worst of all, the Republican party knows this and is colluding with them to achieve an "altogether invincible" command of our national life.

Yet there is a saving "irony": this (apparent) rejection of the true American Religion is in fact an assertion of

> another form of gnosis, another knowing, and what it knows is that it must replace the purely secular authority brought about by the American Revolution.

Anyone in search of coherent argument might be inclined to think that this conclusion is not so much an irony as a plain non sequitur. But then, *The American Religion*, a 288-page imaginative flirtation with nonsense, is a text which both perpetrates and invites misreading.

Establishmentarian

THE CHAIRMAN: JOHN J. MCCLOY. THE MAKING OF THE AMERICAN ESTABLISHMENT. By KAI BIRD. *Simon & Schuster. 801 pp. $30.00.*

Reviewed by JAMES W. MULLER

THAT the victorious Allies succeeded in installing durable and friendly democracies in both Germany and Japan after World War II was the greatest achievement of diplomacy during the cold war. The challenge was greater in Germany than in Japan, because the Nazi regime had been worse and the Allies had to beware of using timbers from the collapsed structure. On the German side, credit goes to the dour but thoughtful Konrad Adenauer; on the American side, no man was more crucial than John J. McCloy, America's High Commissioner to Germany between 1949 and 1952.

In the last decade of the 20th century, McCloy's name is hardly a household word. His preference for working behind the scenes makes his footprints easy to miss. But McCloy's part in the refounding of Germany was only the most important episode in a career spanning five decades of advice to Presidents. In the course of those years he served as Assistant Secretary of War and president of the World Bank. He chaired the Chase Manhattan Bank, the Ford Foundation, the Council on Foreign Relations, and the Advisory Committee on Arms Control and Disarmament. He tried to convince Truman not to drop the atomic bomb on Japan. He also built the Pentagon, invented the hot line, served on the Warren Commission, and foresaw the oil crisis well before the Yom Kippur War.

McCloy's part in the shaping of American foreign policy was examined in an earlier book that considered his contributions along with those of five others,* but Kai Bird's is the first full-length treatment. Almost a decade in the making, the book shows the signs of unusually thorough research. Using interviews, a variety of published sources, and a fat sheaf of freedom-of-information requests, Bird has carefully pieced together the events of McCloy's long career in public and private service.

For a book that McCloy took the trouble to disclaim in advance, *The Chairman* is more sympathetic than he might have expected. Though it bears some traces of Bird's writing for the *Nation*, notably in its suspicion of corporate capitalism and in its leftward leanings on issues like civil liberties and the Vietnam war, it is rather even-handed in its assessment of McCloy. On contentious issues Bird rehearses arguments on both sides before concluding against McCloy, and his criticism is attenuated by an evident appreciation of McCloy's position. He considers McCloy an "admirable" representative of the American establishment, and he attributes to McCloy a certain *gravitas* that typified the men who made this an American century, both for better and for worse.

BORN in 1895, McCloy was an ambitious boy from the wrong side of the Philadelphia tracks. Losing his father at an early age, he owed his education to the sacrifices and encouragement of his mother. After studies at Amherst College and Harvard Law School, he went to work as a Wall Street lawyer, ending up at Cravath, Henderson, and De Gersdorff. His handling of claims arising from an explosion caused by German saboteurs during World War I took him into the shadowy world of transatlantic espionage; by the time World War II broke out, no American knew more than he about German spies.

JAMES W. MULLER, *a new contributor, is associate professor of political science at the University of Alaska, Anchorage, and editor of* The Revival of Constitutionalism *(University of Nebraska Press).*

* *The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made—Acheson, Bohlen, Harriman, Kennan, Lovett, McCloy*, by Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas (Simon & Schuster, 1986). See H.J. Kaplan's review essay, "Requiem for the 'Establishment,'" in COMMENTARY, April 1987.

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Hired by Secretary Henry Stimson as his troubleshooter in the War Department, McCloy quickly became indispensable to Roosevelt and Stimson in planning America's entry into the war.

Early in his public career McCloy faced the first of several questions that continue to excite interest today. In the wake of Pearl Harbor, amid concerns about a Japanese attack on the mainland, it fell to him to decide whether to relocate Japanese Americans who lived on the West Coast. The War Department, to which Roosevelt had delegated the decision, was in a quandary as to whether their removal was a military necessity, while the Justice Department raised objections on constitutional grounds.

On the constitutional question, McCloy is supposed to have remarked that ". . . if it is a question of the safety of the country, [or] the Constitution of the United States, why, the Constitution is just a scrap of paper to me." But the quotation as we have it is probably paraphrased, and he later denied saying any such thing. In any event, though such a cavalier dismissal of the Constitution could not be commended in an attorney, it would be foolish to suppose that the Constitution requires the government to turn a blind eye to the requirements of national security.

In hindsight it is clear that the internment was unnecessary: fears of a Japanese-American fifth column in California were groundless. Bird, moreover, easily dismisses the internment as "a constitutional travesty." But none of this was so evident early in 1942. With Pearl Harbor already laid waste, Americans were urgently apprehensive about the next Japanese move, and disloyalty on the part of Japanese Americans could not be safely ruled out. McCloy's reluctant decision was thus understandable.

It is fairer to criticize the internment in detail than in principle: on account of suspicion, muddle, and neglect it was ill-managed, and it was an injustice (though one never acknowledged by McCloy) not to pay compensation to the internees immediately after the war. But as for the internment itself, if it was a mistake, it was an excusable one. Even the American Civil Liberties Union forbore to criticize it at the time. In later years McCloy always defended it, even after it had become unpopular.

BIRD rightly faults McCloy for his failure to take measures to hinder the Nazi murder of Jews, particularly at Auschwitz. Meticulously he proves that information was available that showed the scale and methods of the killings. Yet, though hardly reluctant to urge vigorous action in other spheres, such as racial integration of the American military, McCloy shrank from approving recommendations to bomb the bridges or the tracks leading to Auschwitz or, later, the camp itself. His stock reply was that the best thing the Allies could do to save the Jews was to win the war, adding the usual military objections against diverting scarce resources from the war effort to other purposes. Moreover, McCloy stubbornly claimed that bombed bridges or tracks could be quickly repaired, that such missions would entail undue danger to Allied planes and pilots, that bombing the camps would kill more Jews, and (most implausibly) that trying to help the Jews might only make Hitler more vindictive.

Bird shows that these claims are excuses rather than considered judgments. In many cases, proposals for bombing raids to disrupt the Holocaust were not even transmitted to theater commanders for study, and evidence shows that they would have been more feasible and effective than McCloy's dismissive replies suggested.

In accounting for McCloy's deprecation of effective action, Bird offers scant support for the idea that he was anti-Semitic. There is some evidence that the most chilling accounts of Nazi extermination reached McCloy's desk only in summary form, or went unread in the press of other business; but undoubtedly he did read reports that were almost equally damning. The most telling explanation is that McCloy, like so many other decent Americans, simply did not believe the stories that reached his ears: Bird concludes that he found them "just too horrible to be entirely credible." McCloy was also influenced by the fact that two prominent American Jews, his neighbor Justice Felix Frankfurter and the columnist Walter Lippmann, did not believe them, either. Even in December 1944, when the facts about the Polish camps were incontrovertible, he cornered A. Leon Kubowitzki of the World Jewish Congress and demanded, "We are alone. Tell me the truth. Do you really believe that all those horrible things happened?"

McCloy fancied himself a realist—he embraced the new technology of espionage, rejecting the dictum of his mentor Stimson that "gentlemen do not read each other's mail." Yet spying was one thing, genocide another. As one who had successfully aspired to be accepted as a gentleman, McCloy was loath to imagine that leaders of a European nation would carry out so fiendish and unspeakable a plan.

SOMETHING of the same reluctance, together with a lawyer's instinctive insistence on due process, probably accounts for McCloy's decision as American High Commissioner in Germany to establish a panel to review sentences meted out to Nazi war criminals. Harkening more to extenuations urged by the defendants than to the original evidence, the panel recommended clemency in many cases. McCloy then followed most of the recommendations to commute or reduce sentences—the most notable instance being the release of the German industrialist Alfred Krupp, who had used slave labor in his factories.

McCloy recognized the need for Germans to understand the injustice of Nazism rather than simply to put it behind them, and he resisted strong German pressure to grant clemency to all convicted Nazis. Nonetheless, he and his panel went too far in that direction. Among those who registered dismay was Winston Churchill, whose own desire for a magnanimous peace with Germany was longstanding and unimpeachable.

Still, McCloy's misplaced mercy does not detract from his un-

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doubted achievement in helping Adenauer found a new Germany. Next to that, his other roles are unimportant. If, tomorrow, the Federal Republic were to go the way of Weimar, then McCloy's accomplishments elsewhere would hardly matter. But if Germany remains a free democratic nation, then that fact decisively outweighs other mistakes on his part.*

McCloy's career as an adviser to Presidents after he returned from Germany to private life in the early 1950's was informed by a sense of public duty. Bird criticizes him for confusing the public interest with the private interests of his legal clients, especially the oil companies; but he has to concede McCloy's skill at making his public and private representations seem like a seamless whole.

The Chairman recalls many incidents of the cold war in which McCloy played a part. In the 1950's, we see him urging Eisenhower to denounce McCarthyism. In the 1960's, he appears as adviser to Kennedy during the Cuban missile crisis. In the 1970's, McCloy's gentlemanly outlook, whatever its limitations, was set off against the opportunism and pusillanimity that marked Jimmy Carter's foreign policy when the President shrank from granting asylum to the Shah during the Iranian revolution. Bird's treatment of this episode is typical of the book. Though he sympathizes with the calculations of those who thought it too risky to give the Shah asylum, he reports arguments, including McCloy's, in favor of asylum that are stronger than his own position against it.

All in all, and despite the fact that some of his judgments miss the mark, Bird is right to conclude that McCloy typifies the strengths and weaknesses of American foreign policy in the postwar era. McCloy's views were conventional rather than original, but they were a shrewd version of the conventional. What coherence American foreign policy has enjoyed since World War II owes much to the continuous counsel of men like him.

* McCloy's tenure as High Commissioner has recently been examined in depth in a fine book by Thomas Alan Schwartz, *America's Germany: John J. McCloy and the Federal Republic of Germany* (Harvard University Press, 1991).

Corporate Culture

TO THE END OF TIME: THE SEDUCTION AND CONQUEST OF A MEDIA EMPIRE. By RICHARD M. CLURMAN. *Simon & Schuster. 368 pp. $23.00.*

Reviewed by PETER BRIMELOW

IN THE spring of 1989, a bitter takeover struggle broke out over Time Inc., the white-shoe publisher of celebrated American institutions like *Time* and *Fortune* magazines, latterly diversified into television programming and cable systems. The struggle was precipitated by Time Inc.'s own management. It accidentally put the company "in play"—to use the contemporary Wall Street jargon—by announcing an agreement to merge through an exchange of stock with Warner Communications, an upstart movie, record, and cable-TV conglomerate with a decidedly unwhite-shoe image and a colorful and controversial chief executive, Steven J. Ross.

This attracted Paramount Communications, another movie and publishing conglomerate, which intervened with a takeover bid for Time Inc. itself. The Time Inc. management knew that its company's shareholders would probably prefer Paramount's ready cash to the combination of stock and hypothetical future advantages of the proposed merger. So it borrowed several billion dollars to buy Warner outright, at a 55-percent premium above what Warner stock had been trading in the market. Unlike the stock swap, this move did not require shareholder permission—at least arguably.

Paramount did argue. It sued, claiming that Time Inc. shareholders should be allowed to choose between buying Warner and its own offer for their shares. But a Delaware court ruled in the Time Inc. management's favor. So the merger went ahead—with Warner's Ross becoming "co-chief executive" and paradoxically emerging as the dominant force in the new company.

The media business is an unusual combination of the cultural and the commercial. In both areas, Richard Clurman's account of the Time Warner merger has the smoothness and confidence to be expected from a former *Time* chief of correspondents—as well as, perhaps, the characteristic lack of nuance.

Commercially, for example, Clurman—like many journalists who usually write about politics—tends to treat companies as countries, or "empires." This is natural and even dramatically appealing. But it can obscure practical questions like how a company makes its money (often very precariously) and who owns it (no single group of Time Inc. shareholders had control, explaining management's urge to merge rather than risk a hostile takeover).

Culturally, Clurman is much taken with the conceit that Time Inc. was a WASP company and its founder, Henry Luce, an extreme conservative. Actually, of course, New York's WASPs have long since gone the way of the Manhattan Indians. Well before the merger, there were many Jews in high places at Time Inc., including Henry Grunwald, who served as editor-in-chief of all Time Inc. magazines from 1978 to 1987 and followed in Luce's footsteps as guardian of the company's editorial values (much praised, particularly by the company itself). Time Inc. just was not as exuberantly and exclusively ethnic as Warner, headed by first-generation Brooklynite Ross. (Clurman quotes without censure "one of the Warner crowd" describing *Time*'s chief executive Richard Munro as "a state-of-the-art *goy*," but he mentions no such uninhibited shorthand description of Warner.)

As for Luce, he was certainly anti-Communist and patriotic, especially compared to the prevailing media norm. But throughout his career he systematically promoted the liberal wing of the Re-

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publican party, culminating in a refusal to support the conservative insurgent Barry Goldwater when he captured the party's presidential nomination in 1964. Luce died in 1967, well before the final triumph of the Republican Right under Ronald Reagan. But he might well have been little more comfortable with the Reaganites than his fellow-Yalie George Bush turned out to be.

THESE qualifications, however, are quibbles in the face of Clurman's sustained and powerful reporting. Most of the time, the facts he has assembled speak clearly for themselves. And what they say is not pretty. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Time Inc.'s managers—the "third generation" after Luce and, unlike him, not journalists but mostly advertising salesmen and financial types—were primarily concerned with enriching themselves personally at the expense of the company's shareholders, on the one hand, and its employees, on the other. That they were able to get away with it with such relative ease suggests that the legal and institutional framework of American capitalism has developed grave flaws.

The Time Inc. managers were not even proposing to run the hijacked and merged company themselves. Thus Munro promptly retired, with stock worth $25-$30 million plus a guaranteed lifetime retirement income of over $1 million a year. And Time Inc.'s president, Nicholas J. Nicholas, got a series of huge pay boosts and a fifteen-year contract, valued by Clurman at $50 million and possibly "many times more," which specified that much of it was due even if Nicholas were to be let go from his proposed post as Time Warner's "co-chief executive" alongside Ross. (Which is what happened after this book was published, a development Clurman astutely foreshadows.)

These emoluments pale only by comparison with the extraordinary amounts the Warner executives had been paying themselves. And the merger was even more profitable for them because Time Inc. bought their holdings of Warner

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"Land for Peace"

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There has been much emphasis for years, intensified in recent months, on the "land for peace" formula to solve the long-simmering problems of the Middle East. Translating this slogan into plain English means that Israel should surrender Judea-Samaria (the "West Bank") and Gaza to the Arabs. They would establish a Palestinian state. Once that happened, it is thought that peace and tranquility would soon come to the troubled Middle East.

What are the facts?

■ The concept of "land for peace" is a totally new one in the history of the world. It was formulated for one specific purpose only, namely to persuade and pressure Israel to give up territories that it has administered since the Six-Day War of 1967. By its victory in that war, Israel wound up in possession of these territories. Contrary to what many are led to believe, the "West Bank," the focus of today's attention, had never been part of any Arab country. It was part of Palestine, a territorial unit that, by the Mandate of the League of Nations and in line with the Balfour Declaration, had been designated as a national home for the Jewish people.

■ Thus, while the concept of "land for peace" is a brand-new one, the concept that to the victor belong the spoils is as old as history itself and had really never been questioned before the days of the Israel-Arab conflict. Our own country, of course, following its Manifest Destiny, has benefited greatly and has consolidated its territory by applying this motto. But Israel followed a different path. From the day of victory in 1967, it waited for an offer of peace from the Arabs. But that offer never came. Instead, immediately following the war, the Arabs pronounced their three unalterable "no's:" no recognition, no negotiation, and no peace with Israel.

■ In 1977, President Sadat of Egypt traveled to Jerusalem and presented a peace plan to the Israeli government. The Israelis eagerly embraced his suggestion. In exchange for peace and normalization of relations with its neighbor, Israel returned to Egypt the vast Sinai peninsula, together with the city of Yamit; some of the most advanced military installations in the world; the port and naval installations of Sharm-el-Sheik, which safeguard Israel's access to its port of Eilat; and the oil fields that Israel had developed and which had made Israel self-sufficient in its energy requirements. And, of course, Israel also gave up the natural buffer against aggression that the Suez Canal and the strategic depth of the Sinai itself provided. It was a first in history. Never before in the chronicle of mankind had the victor returned conquered territory to the vanquished in order to attain peace.

■ One would expect that the concept of "land for peace" would work both ways. After all, should not the Arabs also make some territorial sacrifices for peace? Unfortunately, that is not the case. Every inch of land held by the Arabs is considered "holy Arab soil" and its possession by the "infidels" (Christians or Jews) is inadmissible, intolerable, a blasphemy and a case for "jihad" (holy war). No compromise, no concession is ever possible. The way the "Taba issue" was finally resolved further illustrates the Arab belief that the "land for peace" principle is basically a one-way street.

■ The "land for peace" formulation is now applied mostly to the Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") and Gaza regions. Israel's foes, but also some of its friends, urge Israel to yield these regions to the Arabs, in exchange for "peace." But there is no peace, and no peace will come about by Israel's giving up this area of vital strategic importance to those who are its sworn enemies and who have declared over and over again that they wish to use this land as their launching pad for the final attempt at the destruction of Israel. The conflict in the area is not only between Israel and the "Palestinians." It is first of all between Israel and the Arab nations. With the single exception of Egypt, virtually all of them are still in a state of war with Israel.

To none of the Arab countries has the possibility ever occurred of *their* trading land for peace, for instance yielding the "West Bank" to Israel for the sake of peace. Not one of these countries has even hinted that they would make peace with Israel if Israel yielded the administered territories to the Arabs. There isn't even a gesture of accommodation, such as a lifting of the over 40-year-old Arab economic boycott against Israel, an apology for the odious slander that Zionism is Racism, or a discontinuation of the yearly charade in the United Nations, in which the Arab states attempt to expel Israel from that body. For the victor to yield land for peace to the vanquished is a new idea—who knows, it might even be a good one. But it surely would have to work both ways in order to be valid and effective.

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stock. Steve Ross, for example, received some $193 million, quite apart from his continuing $14-million base salary.

True, Warner was in the movie business, where such huge numbers had precedent. But they had never before been achieved in the print business. (And they were not achieved widely. Clurman notes that although Time Inc.'s editor-in-chief had long been paid the same as the company's chief executive, in 1990 Grunwald's successor, Jason McManus, received only one-fifth of Nicholas's total compensation—which that year included $2.4 million cash and $12 million in stock options—and a thirtieth of Ross's. This was far better than the rest of the editorial staff, decimated by a relentless cost-cutting drive triggered largely by the debt burden incurred to buy Warner.)

Moreover, the "Warner crowd" basically ended up running the merged company. Warner executives took most of the key posts. Warner directors dominated the key board committees. The Time Inc. management even moved into Warner's offices, which needless to say were far more sumptuous.

The only respectable rationale for this is that Time Inc. needed Warner's skills. And indeed, the record of the third generation had been undistinguished: no new magazines; the aborted *TV-Cable Week* launch costing an estimated $100 million; the only bright spot—television and cable—a second-generation idea. Clurman seems to accept the excuse that the magazine business was "mature," i.e., no growth was possible. But in fact the 1980's were a historic boom decade for print. Time Inc. missed it completely.

Whether Warner, primarily a video company, can do any better is unclear in this account. Clurman treats Ross in particular as a charming buffoon who, when the Time Inc. management decided to immolate itself, was lucky enough to be standing there with a match. (Lighting other people's cigarettes during negotiations is a famous Ross ingratiation technique.) But this may reflect another typical failing of much business journalism: businessmen spend a lot of time in grinding, detailed work that writers find difficult to contemplate, let alone assess. Ross's career was made in the complex, dark, and dangerous jungle of Hollywood deal-making. Clurman's vignette of Ross, awake in the middle of the night, reading the contract of two defecting producers, and spotting a loophole worth $500-$600 million, may be more significant than he realizes. Still, this hardly justifies the enormous price Time Inc. shareholders were made to pay.

CLURMAN is properly devastating in his account of the shareholders' first line of defense: their board's outside—i.e., nonmanagement—directors. These made no effort to meet with Ross before the merger, although the Justice Department had listed him as an "unindicted co-conspirator" in a bribery and fraud scandal. Nor after the merger did they reprove his continued efforts to claim still more of the company's money. Outside directors are well paid: Time Warner directors now get $60,000 a year, with more for every meeting they actually deign to attend. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, directors are clearly too vulnerable to cooptation by management.

Clurman seems less concerned with the failure of the shareholders' second line of defense: the law. Yet this is ultimately more serious. Time Inc. was incorporated in Delaware. The state courts there ruled that the merger need not be submitted to a shareholder vote because it was part of a "long-term strategic plan," and also that the "mission of the firm" was not "wholly economic" but the protection of its editorial "culture."

This was a shocking decision. There was little of the "long-term" or the "strategic" apparent in the Time Warner merger—just the ability of Time Inc.'s management to borrow money against the company's assets in a big hurry. The editorial-culture argument could only apply to the print business, but this was just a part of the company. And even here, Time Inc. management had actually made no effort to institutionalize the peculiar editor-in-chief/chief-executive duumvirate set up by Luce to separate "church" (editorial) and "state" (the business side). One "senior Time executive" offered Clurman a damning explanation for the failure. In the rush to put the merger paperwork together, he said, "we forgot."

The Time Warner merger offers a vivid illustration of the danger in departing from a system of clear, simple property rights. Time Inc.'s managers claimed to represent their employees and vague "editorial values." In this cause, Time Inc. shareholders were denied the chance to accept Paramount's offer of $200 a share (at least: a higher bid was rumored). Although Time Inc. management found experts to say the merged company's stock could go to over $400, it actually fell to a low of $66 (and is now only about $110). The company's magazines have continued to flounder. And its "editorial values" were most recently on display in its officers' pious defense of a black rapper's artistic freedom to make a record advocating the murder of policemen. The only indisputable fact is that the Time Inc. management ended up enriching itself.

TO CLOSE on a personal note: in the course of a checkered career involving many business publications, I spent a year in the early 1980's as a writer at Time Inc.'s *Fortune* magazine. I felt I had stumbled across Conan Doyle's Lost World—a plateau cut off from history, filled with exotic creatures who could never have survived elsewhere. Typically, American magazine editors do not edit but rewrite. Here, however, the rewriters were rewritten, many times. The final touch was last-minute intervention by the editor-in-chief from his 34th-floor Olympus, often on ridiculous points of style that had already been worked to death. The entire bureaucracy would keep grinding into the small hours—sometimes the quite large hours—fortified by expense-account dinners and limousines waiting for the homeward trip to Connecticut. The actual product was mediocre.

In Herman Wouk's novel *The Caine Mutiny*, the by-the-book

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peacetime U.S. Navy is perceptively described as "a machine designed by a genius to be run by an idiot." Time Inc. was a machine designed by a genius to be run by a genius—Henry Luce. His successors could maintain the form but not the content. They could stick to the letter, as in their arrogant defense against Ariel Sharon's libel suit on a technicality, but they had lost the spirit. The brutal truth is that corporations do not last forever. Long before Steve Ross came along, death had already reached Time Inc.'s heart.

And, ultimately, the legacy of Luce himself must be judged wanting. Much Time Inc. pomposity and self-delusion can be traced back to his idiosyncratic attitude to the commercial side of the company and the grandiose claim in his will that Time Inc. was "a journalistic concern operated in the public interest." In reality, of course, Time Inc. was a public company financed and owned by shareholders, of whom Luce was only one. For all his brilliance, Luce never thought through to the first principles underlying his position. It was the tragedy of his company, his party, and his caste.

Weapons & War

CLOSING PANDORA'S BOX: ARMS RACES, ARMS CONTROL, AND THE HISTORY OF THE COLD WAR. By PATRICK GLYNN. *Basic Books. 445 pp. $30.00.*

Reviewed by MICHAEL LIND

PATRICK GLYNN'S excellent new history of arms control attempts to answer the question of why disarmament as a goal in itself remains so powerful, in spite of the meager (and sometimes unfortunate) results of past arms-control initiatives. Glynn, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute who served under Kenneth Adelman at the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) during the Reagan administration, unites a partisan's convictions with a scholar's rigor. The result is a provocative and persuasive study of one of the great delusions of our time.

Throughout the cold war, Glynn argues, Western policy-makers

> remained torn between two fundamentally opposing premises: the notion that military strength deters aggression and the competing belief that the arms race itself could be a cause of war.

The latter belief

> helped propel arms control to the center of America's national-security agenda in the 1960's, setting the stage for the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) of the 1970's and subsequent arms-limitation efforts.

The notion that arms races themselves are capable of causing wars by accident long predates the cold war. Drawing on the latest scholarship, Glynn convincingly refutes the widely accepted view that World War I was a case in point—an accidental conflagration, touched off by the addition of the spark of Franz Ferdinand's assassination to the tinder of a European arms race. Rather,

> war came in 1914 for the relatively simple reason that a hegemonic state sought to expand its influence in the world and was persuaded by the apparent momentary weakness and indecision of its opponents to do so by violent means.

What Glynn calls "liberal pacifists" in the generations since World War I have had a special motive for shifting the blame for that conflict from Germany in particular to the nation-state system in general. If world wars result, not from the ambitions of a particular kind of aggressive and hegemonic state but from the ordinary dynamics of the sovereign state system itself, then the case for moving to some kind of world government appears much stronger.

So does the argument that war no longer pays. Exaggeration of the horrors of a second world war (which turned out to be horrible enough, in the event), combined with a sense that old balance-of-power policies had been discredited, provided the context for initiatives like the Washington Conference on naval disarmament of 1921-22—"the first of a series of measures that was to have the main effect of paving the way for a second world war."

This package of received ideas—that arms races cause wars, that the state system itself is obsolete, that a spirit of international amity is more important than insistence on adherence to the details of arms treaties—should have been discredited by World War II. That war, after all, was brought about by the grand geopolitical ambitions of radical revisionist powers, not by the mutual apprehensions of traditional great powers in a functioning state system. The invention of atomic weapons, however, gave liberal-pacifist notions a certain credibility.

For generations, pacifists had been trying to turn one weapon after another—the machine gun, the airplane, mustard gas—into the weapon that, by its capacity to annihilate civilization if used, would render war obsolete. The atomic bomb, the latest in a series of Weapons to End All Wars, looked enough like the real thing to convince many otherwise intelligent people that the old way of conducting international relations really had to change. The destructive power of atomic and nuclear weapons gave a dramatic boost to the credibility of the argument that technology had made traditional conceptions of strategic advantage, indeed, of victory, meaningless. If this argument was correct, then once both sides possessed the ability to destroy one another, military "superiority" became an empty concept.

IN THE central chapters of the book, Glynn traces the progress of this theory to its ultimate triumph in the mid-60's, when Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara abandoned strategic superiority as a goal in favor of "mutual assured destruction" (MAD). This was followed by the renunciation of U.S. ballistic-missile defense efforts, and the move, as early as 1968, toward U.S.-Soviet negotiations on strategic arms control.

The McNamara who emerges

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from Glynn's pages is an individual who, in matters of strategy, consistently prefers the paradox to the orthodox. On the first day of the Cuban missile crisis, McNamara tells President John F. Kennedy, "I don't think there *is* a military problem," denying that the installation of nuclear missiles in Cuba altered the strategic balance. Soon McNamara was arguing that the strengthening of the Soviet strategic arsenal was in the interests of the United States.

By the 1970's, thanks in part to a well-organized arms-control lobby with a beachhead in the government itself, the conviction that military strength deters aggression was in retreat before the idea that arms and arms races cause war. Glynn finds "perhaps the most complete and synoptic expression" of this view in a 1975 *Foreign Policy* article, "Apes on a Treadmill," written by Paul Warnke, an attorney by background who had been one of McNamara's "whiz kids" at the Pentagon. Among other things, Warnke criticized as a "major fallacy" the idea that the national interest would suffer from "failure by the United States to maintain a cosmetic military 'superiority.'" Incredibly, Warnke argued that the Soviets, then engaged in a sustained effort to achieve strategic superiority, were doing so, not to achieve Eurasian hegemony but only out of a pathetic desire to imitate the United States.

Perhaps, then, President Jimmy Carter, by appointing Warnke as his chief arms-control negotiator, was attempting to set a new example for the Soviets to imitate—of a superpower that promotes advocates of unilateral retrenchment to positions of great influence within the government. Had the Brezhnev regime during the Carter years seen fit thus to emulate "its only living superpower model," the Berlin Wall might have fallen in 1979. Instead, the Soviets, having reached strategic parity with the United States, were not content with the symbolic rewards of being an equal superpower. They launched ambitious programs of support for radical third-world regimes and terrorist movements and, in Afghanistan, waged full-scale conventional war beyond their own borders for the first time since World War II.

IN RESPONSE to this new Soviet confidence and aggression, a powerful intellectual and political opposition to the arms-control theology began gaining influence, with champions like Albert Wohlstetter and Senator Henry Jackson. This group's philosophy would come to power with the Reagan administration.

Glynn's generally sound account of recent history suffers at times from a tendency to assume that the priorities of this group have been those of the electorate. His glowing praise of Reagan is also undermined by his own account, which portrays a President who was himself wedded to rather utopian notions about the elimination of nuclear weapons and the "sharing" of SDI.

Moreover, Glynn's American-centered presentation tends to slight the extent to which the Soviet Union was defeated, not by the United States alone but by the coalition of European and Asian powers that the U.S. headed. Thus, it can be argued that German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt's London speech of 1977, which led to the controversial deployment of new intermediate-range missiles by NATO in the early 1980's and the failure of the last great Soviet peace offensive, was as important as the remote prospect of SDI deployment in convincing the Soviets to rethink their cold-war strategy. And Reagan's "evil empire" rhetoric was surely far less critical in inspiring the revolutions of 1989 than the conviction of Mikhail Gorbachev that bloody repression of Eastern Europe would prevent access to the Western resources that were needed to stave off Soviet economic collapse.

"THE ascendancy of the arms-control paradigm had coincided with a weakened and self-doubting period in American history, a period of sad domestic turmoil and foreign defeat," Glynn writes. He sees a reemergence of the rival tradition of military superiority in the Bush administration's strategy in the Gulf War. It is not necessary to agree with Glynn's proposal that the United States and its allies wage similar wars around the world "to underwrite global stability" to share his hope that the tradition of deterrence has triumphed over the theology of arms control.

However, there are disturbing signs that the lessons have not been learned. One is the somewhat hysterical emphasis on "nonproliferation," which repeats the mistake of the older arms-control theology in treating weapons as such, rather than particular regimes, as the problem. Another indication of possible trouble is the disproportionate attention that the Bush administration is paying to concluding arms agreements with the fragments of the former Soviet empire, at the expense of more pressing geopolitical interests in that unstable region (like the removal of Russian troops from other republics to Russian soil).

Glynn's comprehensive and critical account of arms control during the cold war provides every reason to reject the disarmament ideology after the cold war. At the same time, his history of the deep roots of its constituent illusions makes one suspect that they have not flowered for the last time.

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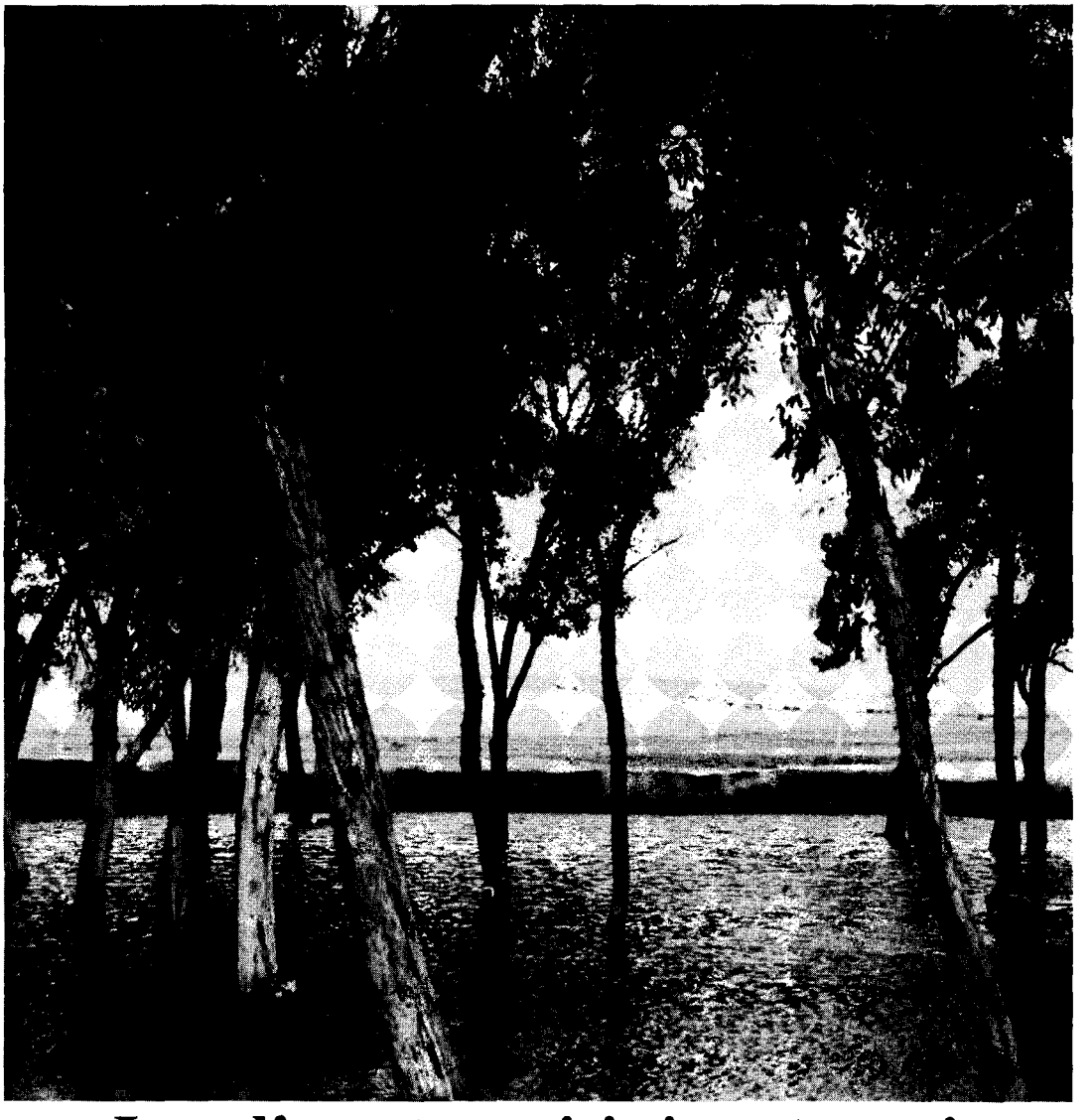

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